

The PHOTODRAMATIST

THE SCENARIO WRITER'S MAGAZINE



IN THIS ISSUE

"THE TRUTH ABOUT HOLLYWOOD"

By ALFRED HUSTWICK

PRINCIPLES OF PHOToplay CONSTRUCTION

By H. H. VAN LOAN

MARCH

25 CENTS



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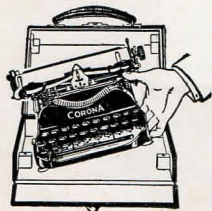
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The PHOTODRAMATIST



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NO SCREEN WRITER SHOULD MISS

the April issue of *The Photodramatist*. A number of feature articles by noted authorities on photoplay writing, as well as the regular departments, will make it one of the most interesting numbers we have ever published.

The *Photodramatist*, published monthly in the I. W. Hellman Bldg., Los Angeles, California, by Photodramatist Publishing Company, Inc. Copyright, 1922, by Photodramatist Publishing Company, Inc. Subscription price—\$2.50 per year. Single copies—25 cents.

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The PHOTODRAMATIST



“The Truth About Hollywood”

An Appeal to the American Public for Justice and Fair Play
for the Motion Picture Profession

By Alfred Hustwick
Of The Screen Writers' Guild

A CAMPAIGN of calumny against the people who are engaged in the motion picture industry is now being waged throughout the United States by newspapers and magazines which are willing to ignore facts and publish lies for the sake of obtaining more circulation.

YOU—the people for whom motion pictures are made—the people who find in motion pictures your chief form of entertainment—the people in whose hands rests the fate of the motion picture art and industry—you are being deliberately misled into a belief that motion picture people are sunk in a morass of immorality, that Hollywood—the community in which most motion picture people live—is a sink of iniquity.

Two unfortunate occurrences, affecting two prominent people in the motion picture world, have been basely exploited by mendacious space-writers, by yellow journals, by unprincipled magazine publishers, as an excuse to pander to the lowest curiosity of the mass mind. This sensational and unspeakable publicity threatens the very existence of the motion picture industry. Only calm refusal to believe the lurid stories presented to you, only the exercise of your common-sense and your sense of justice, only a deliberate decision upon *your* part to await *proof* before swallowing the wild fiction served up to you, *only your good sense and fairness* can prevent irreparable damage being done to the motion picture art and industry and to the vast army of its workers who are being condemned *without a hearing*.

“Truth is mighty and will prevail!”

The *truth* about the motion picture people and Hollywood is what you *want* to know. It will reach you—but slowly, and against opposition. Sin in any form—real or imaginary—is *news*. Virtue is *not news*—it is not even always “its own reward.”

Will you believe that *we*, the 60,000 workers in the motion pictures in California, are as respectable, as law-abiding, as home-loving as *you* are? Will you believe that Hollywood has *less* crime than any city even *twice* its size in America? That Hollywood, where most of us live, has *more* schools and *more* real home life than any other city of its size in America? That such immorality and degeneracy as exists in the motion picture world is confined to an almost negligible number of

bad characters, as few in proportion to the whole number engaged as in any *other* business or profession?

These are just a few *facts* and the proof of them is a matter of public record. Remember these facts—withhold judgment until you learn the *truth*. It will be published for you before long—by fair-minded newspapers and magazines that are conducting impartial investigations; by social and civic organizations that are compiling *facts*; and by the motion picture people in a body who intend to defend their names and reputations, their art and their industry, through the medium of this screen.

The serious situation of the motion picture art, the motion picture industry and the people who earn their livelihood from the pictures, standing at the bar of public opinion, tried and condemned without hearing by a scandal-loving press, represented by divided counsels, and in grave danger from a lawless mob of so-called "reformers"—this was the picture painted in these columns last month. The suggestion was made that the Screen Writers' Guild, as the only really articulate branch of the motion picture industry, should shoulder the burden of clearing the defendants of the preposterous charges brought against them by the panderers of the daily and periodical press, by prurient preachers and professional propagandists.

The Whirlwind

In this article, which set forth these facts and suggested immediate action, the editor of this department referred to the damage done by ill-considered publicity sent out from studios, publicity which had fed the public appetite for sensation, invested the "movies" with an evil glamor, and started a wind of envy, resentment and even hatred which now threatens to return as a whirlwind of public condemnation.

Four weeks after this article was written, a week after it was published, even while the Guild was at work organizing a publicity campaign to correct the slanders hurled at the industry and its people, the whirlwind swept over the country towards Hollywood, unroofing the motion picture edifice, scattering our people in confusion, threatening permanent damage to an institution which educates and entertains the whole world. There is no need to recite here the story of the Taylor murder nor to deal at length with the way the press of the country and the enemies of picturedom have exploited it. It is sufficient to say that this tremendous whirlwind of lies, slanders, libels and half-truths has dazed the motion picture world, amazed the public, and forever disgraced the press of America.

Out of Evil

In the face of calamity, human nature, generally speaking, reacts in a fairly consistent manner. First, confusion and alarm; second, a kind of hopeless calm; third, a never-failing manifestation of the primal instinct of self-preservation, a will to live, a mental and physical activity in which the fighting spirit of the species predominates. This cycle has

been followed in the motion picture world. Sixty thousand people, condemned without a hearing, villified and denounced in a shameful manner, have passed the stage of horrified surprise and hopeless bewilderment. The truth about the motion picture people and Hollywood, the home of the industry, will now be told. The Screen Writers' Guild has led the way. Already an enlarged publicity committee is at work disseminating *facts*—not attacking our assailants or threatening our defamers, not covering up whatever of evil exists in our ranks (and there is some evil everywhere), but in a calm and constructive manner this committee is using every legitimate means to allay public excitement, to place the real facts before the people, to offset the enormous damage that has been done by our own publicists first, and the sensation-mongers second.

"Out of evil cometh good." It is our hope that good will come out of this evil campaign of calumny. *Virtue* is not *news*, but *virtue wronged is news*, and already the tide of reaction has set in. Newspapers which are above the "yellow" class have sent trained writers, responsible people, to investigate the *facts*. On this ebb-tide we may float to a victorious vindication. So long as the attacks upon the industry were spasmodic and sporadic, it was difficult to offset them. Now that a general campaign of vilification has been conducted against us, the plain statistics that prove the motion picture people to be decent, law-abiding, home-making and home loving citizens are *news*. The opportunity presents itself for the picture people to clear their good name and correct the silly impression of their lives and characters which has been made by years of foolish and

ill-advised publicity and by unprincipled traders.

Our Battle of the Marne

"If," as Mr. Kipling says, "we can keep our heads when all about us are losing theirs," if the calmer minds in the picture business can work unhampered by those hot-heads whose indignation threatens to destroy their fighting effectiveness, then the chances are more than even that not only will good result from a present evil but that, by good generalship, the motion picture people may turn an apparent disaster into a tremendous and far-reaching success. Foch, before the Marne, held on in the face of tremendous odds, waiting, waiting, waiting—until the first sign of weakness appeared in the enemy's attack. Then, with rapier-like swiftness, he hurled his battered forces forward and turned defeat into victory.

Now, with the better minds of the country feeling that the picture industry **can't** be as bad as painted, with the more sober newspapers realizing that the very life of the fourth biggest industry has been endangered solely to furnish salacious headlines, with the financial powers awakening to the fact that this outburst of idiotic scandal has cost mil-

ions of real dollars and has seriously disorganized business, and the various elements of the picture business united, at last, by a common cause, there is tremendous power back of the movement to give the picture people a square deal. Sensational publicity will no longer be sent from the studios, exhibitors will refrain from advertising innocuous pictures as if they were full of sex-sensation, newspapers will examine motion picture "news" with a more critical eye, and the public will learn, slowly but surely, that the picture of a debauched industry and a perverted Hollywood served up to them as gospel truth by the press is nothing more than an insult to their intelligence and an insidious attempt to make them exchange their dollars for dirt. The sensation-mongers are having their day. Our turn is coming. Whether the motion picture art and industry will survive this mass attack depends upon our patriotism, our ability to keep cool under fire, and the genius of our generals.

(Editor's Note—The foregoing article is so vital and timely that it is being printed this month in lieu of the usual Guild Forum. In the coming issue under the customary department heading, Mr. Hustwick, in behalf of the Screen Writers' Guild, will give further important information regarding the movement to combat the vicious, untrue attacks that have been made upon the picture industry.)

Elinor Glyn on "Preparation"

By Robert E. Hewes



Elinor Glyn

IF Shakespeare himself were alive today and should attempt translating his great plays into motion pictures without the proper preparation—the mastery of screen technique and of picture values—he would fail."

These words, spoken to me by Elinor Glyn, I think, present very vividly the secret that lies back of her cinematic success. She understands that first of all the thing means *work*.

Very often I hear someone aspiring to success in photodramatic art declare:

"It is getting the first one across that counts, after that it is easy!"

It may be easy if one continues to *work*, but the necessity of combining that same quality with ambition is forcibly brought home to one by coming in contact with noted writers. Madam Glyn, with all

her success, her high position in her profession, is one of the hardest working women I have ever met. She knows that art means work, and does not believe that great things in literature are dashed off in the heat of inspiration without a background of real labor.

"I am often asked," she told me, "how with my first book, 'The Visits of Elizabeth,' I achieved such a success. Ah, they did not know that for twelve years I had been preparing for literary work by intensive reading and study!"

Speaking of motion pictures, she says: "It means hard work . . . hours and days of preparation!"

And Madame Glyn is emphatic in stressing that word *preparation*.

"We think the art of Pavlova is wonderful," she said, "but it has been made so by preparation. In drama, music, dancing, whatever is art, there must be . . . preparation."

So, the substance of Elinor Glyn's philosophy of the cinematic art seems to be—preparation first, and inspiration second.

The Screen Drama League

An Organization to Combat the Censorship Evil

The time has come for those who believe in motion pictures—in freedom of expression for this newest, and greatest, of all arts—to band themselves together in an organized fight against censorship. After a thorough study of the censorship movement, throughout the

United States, *The Photodramatist* realizes the grave menace that confronts photoplay writers. Were advocates of censorship concerned only with the elimination of indecent films, this magazine would raise no protest against their efforts; but it is patent, after a perusal of the absurd decisions made by various censorship boards now in operation that immorality in pictures is the least consideration of these bodies.

Essentially, such boards are political and financial organizations—appointed with ulterior intent—and they appear to be concerned first of all with their “jobs” and last of all with the character of the productions upon which they pass. The fact that films approved in Pennsylvania, for instance, are utterly condemned in Ohio, only to be passed “in part” by the New York censors, shows how ridiculous censorship, in actual operation, really is. No two groups of citizens seem to have the same ideas regarding the films they view. Meanwhile, the rejection, or mutilation, of each film is costing producers—and, indirectly, photoplay writers—vast sums of money, and bids fair to cripple the industry.

Censorship strikes at the heart of the American Constitution. It is in direct violation of the Declaration of Independence, which proclaims that all men were created equal and have the right to pursue liberty and happiness according to the dictates of their own conscience. There are laws in existence, both state and federal, which give the authorities

full right to ban any lewd form of entertainment and to throw into prison anyone who sponsors indecent films or theatrical enterprises. With this machinery at hand for the suppression of the few really immoral pictures, why, then, do the fanatics and demagogues

favor censorship? The answer is that they do not favor censorship—they favor the absolute extermination of motion pictures themselves—some for fanatical religious beliefs and others because they fear the political effects upon their career of the films—and that censorship is only the opening wedge in their campaign to kill the industry.

The Screen Drama League has been formed for the purpose of opposing this movement; to protect the picture industry against relentless enemies; to foster the support of good films, and to elevate the screen to its rightful place as an art equal in importance to any other that the world has ever known. It is unchartered and unincorporated, and has no entrance fees or dues; and *The Photodramatist* is lending its aid to this worthy cause free of charge and without any financial support whatsoever from any source.

The system of the organization is simple. In every city and town there are many friends of the films. We ask you, as a reader of this magazine, to get in touch with at least three others who hold opinions similar to yours. Meet at your home, or wherever you desire. Appoint a president, vice-president, and secretary, and thus form a

chapter of the Screen Drama League. The secretary may then carry on all correspondence necessary with *The Photodramatist*. Each month, this magazine will print advice and instructions pertinent to the campaign against censorship. The principal duties of each chap-

Our Creed

1. To free screen drama from the burdens of minority censorship, political exploitation and the emasculating influence of organized propaganda.

2. To assure to the photodramatist the same freedom of expression accorded to authors, artists and other creative workers.

3. To secure for the photodramatist the right to submit his work to the public un mutilated, thereby assuring him a review by the majority, subject only to proper police regulations.

4. To support and encourage makers of clean and worthy pictures, and to discourage the manufacturers of unworthy pictures by refusing patronage to them.

5. To encourage school, social and parental supervision of children's film entertainment by selecting for them those pictures which are most suitable, thereby permitting the adult to enjoy the same measure of realism on the screen as has always been found in literature and on the speaking stage, and permitting the screening of dramatic masterpieces without unwarranted expurgation of vital scenes.

6. To use voice, pen, vote and personal influence, so far as is possible, in resisting not only class legislation against the screen but also any legislation and propaganda seeking to impose upon any creative art or medium of expression—press, pulpit or public rostrum—censorship or hampering restrictions desired only by a minority.

7. To study and support the best in screen drama and to foster, in every possible way, the development and elevation of the motion picture art.

"The Key to the Kingdom"

Training, Plus Industry, Will Open the Door of Fame
to the Screen Dramatist

By Beatrice Marean Snowden

IT is well to remember at the outset that in the art of photoplay writing as well as in all other branches of worthwhile professions, the old rule, which is as true as it is old, tells us, "There is no easy road to success".

Photoplay writing is the art of visualizing the product of the imagination into real living characters who play their brief part on the screen with a realism as appealing to the beholder as life itself. There is no mystery about photoplay writing. All that is required are the elementary essentials necessary to the work. These briefly summed up are: First, an artistic and creative talent; Second, a fair education; Third, a constructive imagination; Fourth, indomitable perseverance and untiring industry; and last, but not least, a thorough training in the technique of preparing one's work for production. No matter how blest one may be with natural talents, lacking the elementary essentials of the subject in hand, it will be impossible to succeed in photoplay writing, a fact to which many a discouraged beginner will testify.

A course of instruction and proper training under competent instructors is therefore absolutely necessary for success in photoplay writing. After one has mastered "the rules of the game" and the stage is set for achievement, it now rests

with the student whether he will succeed or not. One's instructors can only take one so far, the rest lies with the student himself, and here is where perseverance, industry, and a determination to succeed play a large part.

One should not be discouraged if the first, second, or third attempt at photoplay writing is not a success. Submit patiently to adverse criticism, and try again and again, always with unfaltering faith that success will come eventually.

Have the plot of your play clearly outlined in your own mind and then proceed according to your instructions to put the synopsis of your story into proper form, clearly told in simple yet expressive terms. Interest in the picture must not be allowed to lag but should be maintained throughout the play.

In writing your story strive for originality, though so much has been written on almost every permissible subject, still the field is wide from which to make your choice.

Make a study of your fellow beings so that you may make the characters in

your story true to life and not mere puppets to jump when the string is pulled. Make them like real men, women, and children such as you meet and see in every day life, and then endow them richly with romance, bringing out their beauty of character, their patience



Mrs. Snowden is one of America's pioneer writers. "Deepdale," "When a Woman Loves," and other of her novels, published years ago, ran through scores of editions. In her later years she has been attracted to the photodrama, which, she writes us, she considers the marvel of the age.

under affliction, their trust in the Infinite, their love for humanity; rewarding them at last with the "peace that passes understanding." Leave "vamps", villains, murders, robbery, adultery, illicit love, and other crimes untouched. The public is properly sickened by the daily report of such things, so let us spare it these revolting scenes when it comes to us for entertainment.

Pure, simple stories, interestingly told and uplifting in character will always meet with the approval of the public, for in spite of the materialists, humanity is strangely spiritual, vibrant and receptive to the noble and heroic.

Among the best themes there is love—always beautiful and appealing,—love pure and simple between man and man, or between man and his faithful animal; parental love,—especially mother love; conjugal love; the pure and compelling love between man and maiden; the love of fame—ambition; love of and loyalty to one's country; religious plays showing the beauty and consistency of the true Christian character; educational plays and travels;—all these subjects can be made the basis of photoplays, showing that truth is more wonderful than fiction.

Plays that are humorous in character will always be popular, for the world loves a good honest laugh. The photodramatist who has the art of successfully combining humor and pathos has a power in his hands that few can resist.

One strong attribute of the human heart is a desire to encompass the unknown, to reach up after the Infinite; and a play that leads an audience of playgoers on through the mazes of mystery, ever promising some startling development, will claim the attention and entertain as few others can.

Entertainment as well as wholesome enlightenment is the end and aim of photoplays. Old and young alike seek these. If the plays are of the rightful character, they are capable of doing a world of good; if they deal with crime and vice pictured in alluring colors, it is frightful to think of the evil influence they may have on the public, especially the youth of our day. If the plays are produced according to the lines of high ideals and strict morality, untainted by suggestions of anything that would turn the mind of youth into unclean and demoralizing channels, then we shall hear no more about censorship.



What a Wonderful World

By M. W. Bennett

They're going to cut out my tobacco.
To smoke is sinful of me.
My coffee must go, the reformers say so.
They'll put the kibosh on my tea.
They're going to stop all kinds of dances,
For dancing is vicious to see.
And when they close all the movies and shows,
What a wonderful world this will be!

I must stop eating peanuts on Sunday
In this glorious land of the free.
And the aces and kings, and deuces and things
Of the deck they will not be for me.
Baseball will be voted illegal.
Croquet, tennis and golf will all flee.
When "they" have gone through what they're planning to do,
What a wonderful world this will be!

Of course they will stop osculation,
Love making's a curse, they agree.
If a bloke plants a kiss on a charming young miss,
The prison's gray walls he will see.
The baby cab business will languish,—
No census for posterity.
With a ban on the stork, from Spokane to New York,
What a wonderful world this will be!

"Why Write Photoplays?"

Some Very Good Reasons for Doing So Are
Given in This Interesting Article

By Katherine Leiser Robbins

SHOULD I say I am writing photoplays because this form of writing pays better than any other it might sound mercenary—something no writer wants to be thought—and it would not be all of the truth. Though writing for the movies does pay far better than any other form of authorship, it is a fascinating and absorbing pursuit as well. It is the Art that most nearly approaches Life, which all Art strives to do; and one that attracts not only the professional writer of highest note—Kipling, Rupert Hughes, Gertrude Atherton, for instance—but also the discouraged little tyro, whose imperfections of style and lack of rhetorical knowledge bar his way in the path of literature.

Not that "scenario" writing does not require all the thought and effort one can put into it, but it does not demand the literary polish that comes of long and arduous training nor the complicated technique of the novel. One must have ideas, of course, but just so they are presented in a clear, concise, logical way it is sufficient.

It is natural for people to think in pictures. All children do; and the earliest form of writing was in pictures instead of words; and though manifold books and hurried reading has blurred this instinct in many of us, a little practice in visualization—and my, how the ability to think in pictures grows!—will bring a rich reward for effort expended, for trying again, and *again*, to have one's work produced in living pictures on the screen.

When my first short story was published—in the days when little of the possibilities of the cinema art was known, and motion pictures consisted mostly of the comic, storyless antics of people chasing and tumbling about the screen—I had

thought that to see my name in the listed contents of a magazine, and to read my fancies in its printed pages, was the most gratifying sensation I should ever know. But I was to learn what a small matter this was compared with the first showing of one of my stories on the screen.

I had looked forward to seeing the photoplay with some pleasurable expectancy; but as I sat there in the hushed dimness of the theater and saw the creatures of my fancy, with the faults, frailties, virtues and aspirations with which I had endowed them come to life, and watched them breathe and move, and do the things I had designed them to do—

well, if I tried to tell exactly how I felt about it, it would sound florid, exaggerated, rather absurd, so I'll just say that I came out of the theater with a new vision of opportunity, of the wonder of art, and an incentive to work such as I had never had before.

Incidentally, I will say that the Moving Picture Company paid me two thousand dollars for the

film rights to that first story of mine, so you see there is more than one good reason for writing photoplays.

And another thing: it is the heart's desire of every artist, whether he be writer, painter, speaker, musician, poet, to reach out and move as great a portion of humanity as possible. And what chance has he compared with that of showing his work on the screen?

Take Rupert Hughes' "Old Nest" for instance. The story was published quite a few years ago in a popular magazine. I read it, thought it a "sweet, human story" then proceeded to forget all about it, as I believe did the majority of those who happened to read that particular number of the magazine. The photoplay was

Katherine L. Robbins

was content to sell stories to the magazines for from \$20 to \$200, she writes us, until one day The Universal Film Co. offered her \$2,000 for one of her efforts. Since then, she has sold five screen dramas at prices that would stagger the average author of published fiction.

shown here a few weeks ago; and it was almost as though I was lifted bodily and swept back to my Old Nest, to my childhood, and to my mother's and father's tender, self-sacrificing care. These had become dim memories, buried under the litter of busy, everyday affairs, but the magic of art brought them back with such realness and poignancy that my heart ached and my eyes filled with tears. I felt a little shame-faced, and furtively dabbed my eyes, until I saw one tear also roll down the lean, bronzed jaw of a prosperous-looking, typical business man near me, heard sniffs in various directions, and caught the flutter of several handkerchiefs.

Then I realized that it was not a mere bit of feminine emotionalism that moved me, but the vibration of a chord to which is attuned all that is simple, and natural, and best in the human heart; and that what I felt everyone who saw the picture felt too—all the numberless thousands that throng the moving picture theaters throughout the world. And when I

couldn't get home fast enough to send my mother a present and write her the longest letter I'd written in years, I knew that I was accompanied by a vast company, and that not only my mother's heart was to be gladdened by a proof of remembrance, a recognition of her love and care, but that of thousands of other mothers, many of whom doubtless felt lonely, useless and forsaken.

In no other way could such numbers have been reached, in no other way could such a lesson have been taught a busy, self-engrossed world, in no other way could so much happiness have been given to those who deserve it most.

And thus we see that the screen writer may possess a power such as no artist has ever had before, a power not only to amuse and entertain, but to teach, and to help, and to arouse all that is best in mankind. And it is for this reason, as well as for the financial rewards, and the very real fascination of the game itself, that I am writing Photoplays.



“The Public Wants—”

By F. Clair Roche

What does the public want—that oft repeated cry,
The writer of the day says his creation
Is what the public wants, in pictured plot and style,
They'll throng to see my tale of love and passion.

I feel the public pulse—the famed producer cries,
A girl's pure heart—a lover's adoration;
The pulse is felt—the nightly throng scan lithographs, then pass along
He felt the public pulse and then, he lost it.

What does the public want—we'll ask the public that,
Replies are many, filled with variation;
We want—the public wants a play, of passion grand, of country jay,
The public wants—not what it wants—and wants it.



THE student of screen drama who resents honest criticism will never progress far along the road to success. Despite what you may think, your first efforts in photoplay writing are not going to be masterpieces.



IF you wish to learn whether or not the public observes the writer's name upon a picture play, foist upon it a poorly done piece of work. The ensuing “roar” will end forever any doubts you may have as to the importance of the author.

"Don't Blame the Editor if Your Scenario Comes Home"

Says Bryan Irvine

HOW many times have you heard this remark from one who writes and writes and cannot sell what he writes? "The only reason my work fails to get on the screen is because it is read and passed upon by some scenario editor or two-by-four reader who has no creative ability himself and, therefore, does not know a good story when he reads it."

Or again from the same source: "If the scenario editor or reader who rejects my story has never written or sold anything himself, how can he be a competent judge of my work?"

The answer to these questions is so palpably obvious that to discuss the point seems almost absurd. Yet the question is repeatedly asked by thousands who write or try to write for the screen. No doubt there are other thousands who do not come out openly and "holler their heads off" about this imaginative injustice, but continue to pound away at the old typewriter and accept the condition as one of the painful handicaps of unrecognized genius.

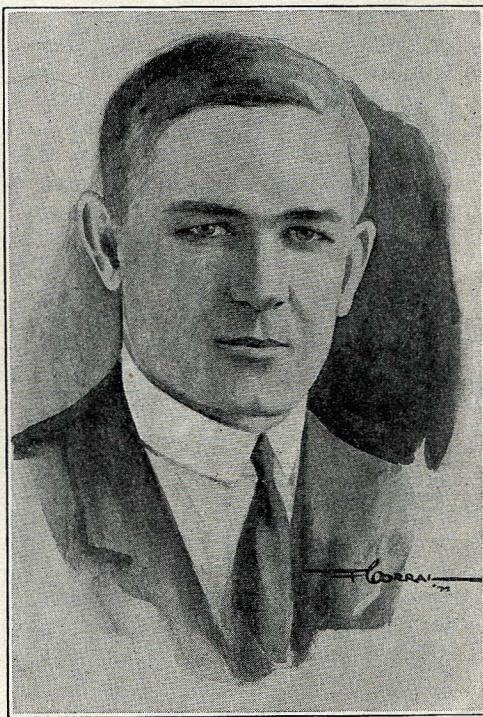
So let's argue the point a bit.

First, how many magazine editors are or have been authors? Not so many. It is a peculiar fact that the best magazine editors have never written fiction. Who, for instance? Well there is Bob Davis, for many years editor-in-chief of

the Munsey Publications. Looking over a long list of well-known—even famous—fiction writers of today we find dozens who were "found" by Robert H. Davis. He had not the creative mind, but he knew when he read a contribution whether it was only words or a sure-enough story.

We could name many other magazine editors who frequently and unerringly pick winners from the army of embryo fictionists—editors who never wrote a story or, if they had written stories, could not sell them. The same thing is true of scenario editors.

A building inspector is not necessarily a bricklayer or a carpenter. Another simple but incontrovertible simile is that the small boy may not be a pastry cook, but he knows good apple pie when he tastes it. And I know scenario editors and humble readers who have never written a scenario and are wise enough not to try, who, when a good story drops on their desk, "eat it up," although I grant that most scenario editors come from the ranks of trained



Bryan Irvine is considered one of the best judges of scenarios at the Ince Studios. He is also a gifted photoplaywright, having achieved his present high position in the motion picture world by virtue of his many successful screen dramas.

photoplaywrights.

After all there is little ground for argument. Who is the final judge of screen productions? Why, the great American movie-going public, and they or it, in spite of the fact that perhaps only one out of ten thousand knows anything

about the technical elements of a photoplay, cannot be fooled. The box-office tells the final story.

A scenario editor and his readers have merely made an exhaustive study of what is and what is not of screen value. A good photoplay must be a proper mixture of certain elements, just the same as cake must be made of certain portions of certain ingredients. Many a breakfast has been spoiled by too much or too little soda, or salt, or water, in the flapjack batter.

The scenario editor first looks for one—at least one—original or semi-original dramatic situation in a submitted story. All right, maybe the situation is there. Now, is this really good situation drifting helplessly about like a rudderless derelict in a sea of meaningless, though perhaps pretty, words and phrases? Often, unfortunately, very often, it is. What does the poor editor chap do then? He knows that it is a good situation all right, all right; but that's all there is to the story—just a good situation without head nor tail. He feels about the same as he did the time he put his last dollar in the jackpot on the poker table and held a four-card flush that refused to fill. Perhaps this editor is one of the best in the business but has never written or tried to write a story himself and has no inclination to write. If the situation is a good one he may pass the story on to a staff writer, trained in screen technique, who will attempt to dress it up in all the other essentials of a good story—love interest, conflict, suspense, heart interest

and what not. But if the situation is merely a fair, conventional one, the editor throws up his hands, curses a bit, then puts it into a return envelope along with the printed slip that says "rejection does not necessarily imply lack of merit, etc., etc." That word "necessarily" on a rejection slip covers a multitude of sins.

Speaking of these all-important situations, the number of promising writers who apparently do not know what a situation is appalls one. I actually believe that many amateur writers unconsciously create good situations while amusing themselves with a long chain of incidents. Not long ago I read a very good original written by a lady in Colorado. She had pushed the story logically and quickly into a really good situation and carried it on step by step to a smashing climax, then quickly tapered it off to a nice ending. The lady, evidently fearing that her nice situation would "go over our heads," inclosed a letter with the script calling our attention to the situation, taking great pains to outline it fully in the letter so that it would not escape us when we read the script. But—the "big" situation she had outlined in her letter and was so afraid we would miss was not a situation at all; it was a very trivial incident in the story, had no bearing whatever on the main idea and would never have been missed had she forgotten to write. Still, she was banking on that incident—called a situation by her—to bring home a check. Apparently, she was blissfully ignorant of the fact that she had created a good situation in the story.

Regarding "Conflict"

By L. Hector Lucier

The public dearly loves a fight, and as long as there are two red-blooded men alive, I think a good fight will hold its appeal, in life and in drama.

The "struggle everlasting" will continue as long as life lasts. There are very few men who have success handed to them on a silver platter; the majority of us must struggle from the bottom of the ladder up. True, sometimes as we begin to get away from the bottom rungs the struggle is easier; but let us relax for a moment, and we are confronted with somebody trying to pass us on the ladder to Success, and again we must struggle to regain our position. Life without struggle would be drab and dreary. The public will always love a fight, be it mental or be it physical; but let there be the element of conflict, and it will be true to life.

'Situations Wanted' by Screen Actors

A Plea, Not for Employment, but for Real Suspense
and Drama in the Photoplay

By Raymond Hatton

Each of us who have devoted years of study to our art—and every player of importance in the screen world must be included in that category—has definitely fixed in his mind the part, or type of part, he wants to play. Generally speaking, however, a part, or type of part, is too vague to allow a clear definition. When I think back over the roles I have created for the screen or when I consider such fiction as I am familiar with with a view to naming my favorite part, I find that my choice depends not upon the part as an entirety, but on the situations into which the character is thrown. It would seem, then, that a player can more definitely tell a writer what to give him for a vehicle, if he will name those situations that afford the greatest opportunity for dramatic expression.

It seems to me that every situation of real worth to which I have contributed was one in which the player who is the center of interest is in a state of unusual suspense. The suspense of a character in a well written dramatic story holds the spectator in a similar state of suspense, that makes him susceptible to the slightest suggestion of the player. I know from my first-hand study of motion picture audiences that much subtlety of action that is lost in many scenes is vivid and

forceful in a sequence of dramatic intensity.

Invariably, when I am asked, I say that the role of John Trimble in "The Whispering Chorus", one of the big successes in its day, was my favorite part,—that it afforded me a greater opportunity

for such capabilities as I possess than any other screen role I have created. After a recent analysis of that role, I became further convinced that I reached my decision, unconsciously perhaps, because of the splendid dramatic situations in that part.

In suggesting to you, on whom we must depend for the photodramas of the future, the situations that appeal to the actor, I must refer to picture plays in which I have appeared. I must recite those scenes which have given me my greatest opportunities and let them hint at what I, and every other player, now want. I can do no more than offer a suggestion for, were it possible for me and other players to create such stories as the screen so badly needs, there would not be such a splendid field for writers



His extreme versatility and ability to portray any part convincingly have made Raymond Hatton one of America's foremost character actors. His message to scenario writers is, therefore, authoritative and well worth heeding.

of film stories as there now is.

A sequence of scenes in "The Whispering Chorus" occurs to me as the most powerful I have known in my own work, or in watching the efforts of others. Let me outline the situation: John Trimble,

a hunted man, is starving and is without funds. He is fishing for food that is an urgent need. He feels on his line a heavy pull which at first encourages him, but later shakes him with fear as he has difficulty in drawing to the bank what he knows is an inanimate object. The suspense of the character, as he struggles with the weight, which is bringing to him an inexplicable feeling of horror, arouses a sympathetic suspense in the audience that makes every spectator susceptible to the slightest suggestion of the player.

Trimble is horror-stricken as he finds that he has drawn to the surface a human body. Quickly, however, he regains his poise sufficiently to examine the corpse. He discovers that the man bears a remarkable resemblance to himself; he decides to change clothes with the body so that he, John Trimble, will be known as dead, and thus will have an opportunity to return to the world, free from the ever-threatening shadow of the law.

The beauty in that series of scenes to me lay in the fact that the original situation was so tense that the audience was brought right into the consciousness of the character, so thoroughly that it could follow his every thought. That sequence reached the screen without a subtitle, and I am vain enough to believe that the raciocinations of the character were clear to every one.

A situation, later in the same story, though not so effective as the former, was among the most forceful to which I have had the opportunity to contribute. John Trimble, after the series of incidents outlined above, is arrested and put on trial for his own murder. A character on trial for his life in any picture will pass through a series of incidents that are rich in chance for strong dramatic expression. But in this picture, the character was being torn between two equally

fatal procedures: he must face trial for killing a man who still lives; or he must prove that man still lives and face the dire consequences of disclosing his own identity.

To specify further any definite scenes that have appealed to me would, in a sense, be to repeat. The two situations I have outlined are, in the same way that they are similar to each other, similar to those other scenes I have played that were richest in the occasion for dramatic expression.

Both scenes I have mentioned were dominated by the suspense of the chief character. In each case, the character was afforded a choice between two courses of action, both of which were obvious to the spectator. There is an opportunity for greater thrills, more melodrama, in a variation of these situations. The suspense of a character who is awaiting a known—or, for that matter, an unknown fate, when he has no possible means of escape, affords this chance; but such scenes are far easier to play. For in these scenes, the player has merely to project his terror or his anguish, and there is none of the subtlety in his work that is demanded when he must suggest to his audience, from the depths of his own thoughts and emotions, the varied thoughts that are passing through his mind.

If I have chosen to be a character actor, it is our filmplays that have forced the decision on me. I am an actor, first, and I crave the opportunity for self-expression that is foremost in every real "trouper." Our screen plays have thrown those situations which are worth while to character players—that is why an actor will tell you, as I do, that he wants to play "characters." He is like me in that he feels the eternal urge to place his advertisement in those columns which are headed: SITUATIONS WANTED.



WRITING is an art—which means that it is hard work.



CLEVERLY told incidents cannot bolster up a photoplay that is fundamentally weak. A false premise is much like a poor foundation; the superstructure, no matter how beautiful, or how well constructed, is liable to topple at any moment.

Principles of Photoplay Construction

By H. H. Van Loan

WHAT made the World War so fascinating to every human being? What made Peary's discovery of the North Pole such a remarkable achievement? Why did the early experiments of the Wright Brothers command the interest of civilization? Why do we manifest such interest in the death of the Pope or the birth of the lowly babe of Nazareth? Why do we prefer to weep when we know we would much rather laugh? Why is it we always pause to watch a train pass? Why does the public crowd the theatres and moving picture houses and ignore the churches?

The answer to all these questions and similar ones is, because the world loves melodrama. The World War was alluring because it was filled with melodrama. It thrilled the earth. Perry's discovery of the North Pole was very simple, and yet, a very great thing. It was a remarkable achievement. And yet, the North Pole has proved it is worthless, but, it also proved that man has wonderful endurance and can, with the aid of admirable persistency, overcome all obstacles in his desire to prove the existence of a certain thing. The experiments of the Wright Brothers with flying machines interested the

whole world because man, up until that time, hadn't seemed ambitious to compete with the winged birds of the air. The element of risk was attached to all these achievements: the possibility of death. With quickening pulses and throbbing hearts, the people of the world

read the tragic accounts of the World War, because it was real melodrama.

The world loves melodrama. It loves to experience the thrills which accompany action which seems to predict certain death. We are all sensational, and we revel in big, thrilling plots, intrigue, suspense and mystery.

The World War played on every emotion known to the human race, and, while we stood back in horror and watched the great "super-special" being unreeled with terrified countenances, yet, in our hearts we enjoyed the big show. Why? Because all of us enjoy melodrama. Newspapers feature remarkable events in our daily lives on the front page because the editors know that the readers prefer to read stories which have

the elements of suspense, mystery, and intrigue. The story of a remarkable murder is spread all over the front page and the sermon of the Rev. Josiah Jebbs is hidden away in some unnoticed cor-



H. H. Van Loan's great success as a photoplaywright may be attributed largely to his almost uncanny ability to sense what the public wants. The accompanying article, which will be concluded in the April number, is worth careful study by every student of photo drama.

ner on one of the back pages, because the public is morbid and sensational and would prefer to read a perfectly good melodrama that fall asleep over the religious eulogies of those who are trying to save its soul.

It's been so since the beginning of time, since the days of Eden, and it's going to remain that way just as long as there are people on the earth. We are all morbidly curious, and the craving for the sensational dominates our every word and action. We are always looking for the big thrill: the stuff that makes our blood tingle and raises goose-flesh along our gills.

"Give them melodrama!" This is the reply I always make when I am asked the question as to what the public wants, in the form of a story or photoplay. All right. Now then, what is melodrama? Melodrama is "yellow" drama. It's the stuff that has a big "kick" in it. It's the same sort of stuff that you will find smoothed all over the front page of your favorite newspaper today. It may be a story about the death of the Pope; perhaps it refers to the sensational escape of Roy Gardner, the "King of Bandits," or, again, it may discourse on the elopement of Tillie Teeds, the daughter of millionaire Teeds, the inventor of the pointless tack. Perhaps it relates to a poor Mexican family that lived twenty days without food, or a six-months-old baby killed by a motor car yesterday afternoon. It may be round most anything, but, whatever it is, you can rest assured it is melodrama.

The public reads the newspapers. The readers of the newspapers demand real melodrama and they just gloat over that which is enacted in real life every day. They enjoy the mystery, intrigue, and suspense; and that is why the editors of the newspapers feature such stories on the front page. The moment a mystery story is solved the public loses interest immediately.

The public loves melodrama in real life. It enjoys it because melodrama is natural. There is more melodrama in the world today than there has ever been before. There is a reason for it. People are more sentimental, emotional, and romantic today than they have ever been in the history of the world. Show me the man whose life has never contained an element of suspense, mystery, or intrigue and I will show you a million successful men whose lives have been crowded with

more thrills and melodramatic situations than you will see on the screen during its life-time. Life is melodramatic. That is the answer. It is filled with startling situations and thrilling climaxes, and, when we desire to be amused we want to see something which mirrors life as we know it. This explains the success of "The Miracle Man," "Humoresque," and many other photoplays of the past year or two. They are melodramas.

The greatest stage or screen successes have been melodramas. Melodrama is the thing. Melodrama is what the public wants, and the writer who gives the public Melodrama is certain to find his writings will be enjoyed and there will be a demand for his work.

The Arizona Republican recently held a scenario contest, and, out of a list of about three hundred scenarios submitted only three were comedies, the rest were melodramas. Why? Because these stories were written by the public, and the public showed the trend of thought, and, that trend of thought was natural; it was melodramatic. There were a hundred different kinds of murder in those scripts! There were shootings, stab-bings, duels, dynamitings, and every conceivable sort of crime was called into action in order to give somebody a legitimate excuse for annihilating someone else. There were a couple of excellent burned-at-the-stake-by-Indians plots. In fact, I must admit I don't know when I've witnessed such an excellent assortment of murders as were contained in those scripts. After reading some of them I rose and literally sponged the blood from my hands and I'd get into bed and pull the blankets over my head and then turn the light out.

The point I want to bring out is, that these stories were written by the public, and it revealed the trend of public thought. It proved to me that the mind of the public is running riot and apparently becoming demoralized. But greater than all else, it proved that life is one great melodrama, for, every one of those who submitted scripts in that contest admitted that they had based their story on real facts and that they had actually lived that particular experience themselves! Do you want any more proof that the public loves melodrama?

A great many writers think that melodrama consists of one or more killings and that in order to make a good story they must have a couple of first-class

murders. They are wrong. When they start to do that they are imitating Shakespeare. That is tragedy. Melodrama consists of equalized portions of romance, suspense, mystery, and intrigue, flavored with plenty of good snappy action. Then bring them all to a good thrilling climax and you've got a story. A series of situations will not make a story. Establish first a reason for the story and then embellish it with dramatic situations, plenty of action, pleasant surprises, and good romance. It is not necessary to kill someone in a story in order to make it a good story, and this does not constitute melodrama. It is possible to write a corking melodrama without demanding the sacrifice of a single individual.

The question is often asked, "What does the screen want? The screen wants good stories. A good story is always easily disposed of, and the producer will admit that all he ever asks is a good story. The producers are buying good stories and they will continue to buy them as long as they can find them. Tragedies are not very popular; farce comedies have a fair following, and there is always room for comedy-drama. But melodrama is always in demand, because it reflects life itself. The great successes of the stage and screen have been melodramas; mirrored life, with its

thrills, suspense, intrigues and startling climaxes.

It is true that people like to laugh, but, it is a fact that they prefer to cry. It is easier to make the public cry than it is to make it laugh. The writer who can make it laugh makes more money. And yet, it doesn't want to laugh long. It never gets tired of tears. The public is melodramatic; the world is melodramatic and that's why it likes to weep. The writer who can bring the tears to the eyes of the audience is in demand. The writer who can make it laugh a little and cry a little will be in great demand. The writer who can inspire laughter is the greatest writer of them all, because he has to do real big creative work. There isn't much laughter in real life. If you think there is, walk down the main thoroughfare of any big city, any day, and try and find something really humorous. On the other hand, note the many melodramas and tragedies on all sides as you pass.

There has always been a big demand for melodramas, because they are reflective of life itself, and, the audience whether it be a stage or screen audience, wants dramas which reproduce actualities. Melodrama reflects life: melodrama is life. Give the producers more of life, embellished with fiction and the producer will be happy.

(To be continued)



Photodrama

Bp W. S. Taylor

When first Daguerre found out that focused light
In cameras, would chemicals erase
And make the shaded picture of a face,
Photography, an Art, was born aright;
Like Rembrandt's paintings rare, in black and white,
Fine portraits, showing skill, soon took their place
And vivid views of beauty and of grace,
Were visualized to please the public sight.
Next was the Mimic Art with it combined,
And motion pictures, scenes with action rife
By actors shown, realistic, true to life,
In dramas, written each by master mind;
Creating thus a double art to treasure,
The Photodrama—source of joy and pleasure.

THE BEAUTY of the world is caught and thrown upon the screen—a sweep of the desert mesa, the hills dark against the sky—a young orchard in bloom, blowing in the wind—a great moon with the eucalypti of California dark against its silver—the great stretch of the sea, and the fog swirling in to the land.

IN THE FOREGROUND



Being a Department of Brief Chats on Topics Within The Camera's Range

"Movie" Morals

THE bitter campaign against "the movies," which was started and is being carried on by certain publicity-seeking fanatics and demagogues, seems to have been given added impetus by the shocking murder of William D. Taylor, one of filmland's prominent directors.

Just why, considering the astonishing number of violent deaths in all walks of life during recent months, the killing of Mr. Taylor should be used as an argument against motion pictures, is hard to fathom; especially as, at the present writing, there seems to be no definite clew to the murderer or any occurrence connected with the crime that could possibly be used as a basis for accusing the unfortunate victim or his friends of being vicious or immoral.

Such expressions as "dope ridden," "degenerates," "painted butterflies," and "criminal morons," which have been openly applied to Hollywood and its some 60,000 residents by certain speakers and publications during the past few weeks are not only gross untruths, but are libelous in the extreme; and could be the product only of minds that are themselves depraved, utterly ignorant, or blindly prejudiced.

Those who live in Hollywood, or who have visited that beautiful community long enough to gain an insight into actual conditions, know that its residents are no worse than persons in any place of similar size—probably better. Even the evangelist, "Billy" Sunday—admittedly caustic in his condemnation of amusements that most persons consider harmless—stated, in a recent article in *Screenland Magazine*, that for each dissipated person in the film studios there are a hundred who work hard, spend their evenings with their families, and are sturdy citizens in every sense of the word. Surely, this ratio is better than any average community or profession can boast; and, knowing this, it is hard for sincere members of the screen world to remain silent in the face of the bitter invectives that have been hurled at them by the ill-advised, nasty-minded orators and writers who rushed into the lime-light immediately following the Taylor tragedy.

In fact, the motion picture profession does not intend to remain silent much longer. At recent mass-meetings held in Hollywood steps were taken to combat the vitriolic publicity that has been directed at film folk and their profession, and readers of *The Photodramatist* may rest assured that, if the program as outlined is followed, there will be some plaintive wails from certain "anti-movie" quarters within a short time.

Possibly it has not occurred to some of the attackers of "the movies" that the publication or utterance of malicious untruths—of statements and opinions that cannot be proved, but which can do injury to the person, or profession, at which they are hurled—constitutes criminal libel; and that there are laws which make any person, or publication, issuing such statements liable to arrest and imprisonment.

Should a number of newspaper editors, writers and public men who have been so free with their denunciation of the film colony be required to prove even a fraction of what they have said regarding Hollywood and its motion picture folk during the past few weeks, they will be sadly chagrined people indeed. Possibly, however, a stiff fine and a term in prison might be beneficial to certain of these persons, in that it would give them opportunity to think—an art most of them seem to have long since lost.

Concerning Friends

SOMEONE has remarked quite aptly that our worse enemies are often our best friends. Nothing could be more true than this seeming paradox. It is our enemies who, although sometimes unjust, point out to us our many faults, and keep us from becoming settled in the rut of self-satisfaction.

Just so, the photoplay writer who depends upon his "friends" for criticism and advice on his screen dramas is due for a sorry tumble. A real friend, of course, should tell one the truth, but how few real friends there are in the world. As a general rule, one's social acquaintances, no matter how intimate, will smilingly indulge in the grossest lies rather than hurt the feelings of one who comes to

them for advice; or else will be so blinded to the defects of the person they admire, that they will be incapable of giving an impartial comment upon anything that such a person may do.

Of course there is a reason for this. The average photoplaywright who places his latest effort in the hands of a friend and asks him to "give me your candid advice," does not wish candid advice at all. He wishes merely to be told that he is a wonderful writer and has turned out a masterpiece; and if the friend in question should presume to point out any glaring defects in the work at hand, the writer would stalk away highly indignant and the basis for an enmity would probably have been laid.

On the whole, it is best to avoid both friends and enemies in obtaining criticism on your photoplays. Although it is to be granted that competent, unbiased judges are often hard to find, and that the best of them have a disconcerting habit of charging hard cash for their opinions, such critics are the only ones who will give the aspiring screen dramatist really constructive aid and help him along the path to permanent success.

What Do They Want?

THE editor of *The Photodramatist* is repeatedly asked the question: "What type of photoplay is most easily marketed?" And since this is undoubtedly a matter of vital interest to every screen dramatist, a few words on the subject might not be amiss at this time.

It can safely be said, of course, that any "big" story—any scenario based on a vital theme, and which treats new ideas in a novel and workmanlike manner—is certain to find a producer. However, that is a statement somewhat general in its scope, and the average scenarist desires more definite information.

The type of photoplay most easily sold at this time is the comedy-drama, or society drama, in which the lead may be played by an ingenue. There are some forty producing units at present which are starring young actresses of from eighteen to twenty-five years of age; and since these stars appear in from six to twelve pictures annually, it can readily be seen that the producers must purchase a large number of scripts for them. We venture to say that no well constructed ingenue-lead story will pass through many hands, these days, before finding a buyer.

Virile dramas, or comedy-dramas, for young male stars are next in importance as selling possibilities. With twenty-seven companies

producing plays of this type, it is apparent at a glance that the ambitious writer has that number of markets for any young male lead photoplay he offers—provided, of course, it has been properly written and is worth filming.

The well-done "western" drama is equally certain to find a purchaser. Despite the cry that arises from time to time that the day of western pictures is ended, the fact remains that fifteen or more films of this type are released monthly—and that they are generally successful. The wise photodramatist, however, will steer clear of the conventional, trite themes, characters, and situations in writing such photoplays. If he wishes to sell them, they must be "different"—which means that the hero who "shoots up" a saloon, evades the crooked sheriff and marries the beautiful, and ever innocent, dance-hall girl is a thing of the past, and that as much care must be taken in plotting and constructing a film play of this sort as with stories of any other classification.

Emotional dramas, for male or female lead, while always tempting to the photoplaywright as subject matter, are exceedingly difficult to dispose of. There are but two or three actresses in pictures today who can handle a role of this type, and an equally limited number of actors. There is also the danger, when writing emotional, heavy drama, that the screen dramatist will introduce censorable, objectionable material. Indeed, the writing of heavy drama without bringing in the sordid incidents, is one of the most difficult tasks encountered in the art of photodrama.

All-star stories and farce-comedies for male or female lead are purchased from time to time by various companies; but farce-comedy is an exceedingly hard type of story to write—to suit producers, at least—and, in spite of the number of successful all-star pictures that have been released, the photoplay that embodies an outstanding leading role is by far the best selling possibility.

The Price of Success

PHOTOPLAY writers are not immune from the periods of depression that come to every sincere artist. Generally over-optimistic at the start—believing that fame is easy of attainment and that screen drama may be mastered with small effort—the aspiring scenarist is inevitably chagrined and discouraged when his first offerings are rejected by the producer.

As a rule, following the failure of his maiden effort, he will stop studying and working, and, in an outburst of self-pity, declare that there

is no chance for him as a scenario writer, that the film world does not want worthwhile stories, and that he is **through**. Of course, he is not through,—if he has the real qualities of success within him. He is, in fact, only beginning; and when he has studied more and spent more time in the practice of photoplay writing, he will probably laugh at his first discouragements and wonder at the shortsightedness which prompted him to believe that his crudely done, early efforts contained merit.

It is impossible to stifle a true artist with a few rejection slips. Indeed, these same rejections often have a very salutary effect; for they teach the student scenarist what **not** to write, and force him to spend more time in preparation for his ultimate vocation. All the technical training in the world—indispensable as it may be—is valueless without the added lessons that can be learned only from experience.

The editor of *The Photodramatist* realizes that creative artists are bound to be more or less emotional during periods of discouragement, and that it is asking much to request that they sit down and view their work in the light of pitiless truth. Nevertheless, that is exactly what every photoplay writer, at some time in his career, must do. He must, figuratively speaking, draw up a set of books, in which he must balance the advantages and disadvantages of his chosen profession. In doing so, he must set down the price of payment as well as the reward he expects to gain. This price may at times seem high. The optimistic student is reluctant to admit that he will have to spend many months—possibly years—at difficult mental labor. But if he is fair with himself and others, he must

also admit that the article he is buying with this self-sacrifice—artistic and financial success—is worth fully what it costs.

Minor Characters

FREQUENTLY the question arises: "How much time, should I devote to the delineation of minor characters in my photodramas?" This is a query not so easily answered as might appear at first glance. As a matter of fact, in one sense of the word, there is no such thing in screen drama as a "minor" character. By this I mean that any character worth introducing into a photoplay is worth the careful attention of the writer. It is natural, of course, that the leading character should be "played up" more prominently than any other person of the play, since the action—if the story is properly constructed—will center about him or her, and his or her struggle. However, this same action, in its relation to the major character, will appear plausible and convincing only when properly motivated; and it will not be properly motivated unless the other characters appeal to the spectator as real human beings and are carefully visualized and developed. This is one of the big differences between the great play and the near-great. It is to be regretted that in many instances the egotism of certain stars has resulted in a weakening of the characters surrounding them in their dramatic vehicles, and has not only lessened the appeal of the story, but has also proved more or less of a boomerang to the self-centered actor himself, since the public cares little for the "footage" devoted to Mr. Star but, rather, judges a picture as a whole.



AS IN LIFE, the future is but the past entered through another gate, so in your story should one incident grow from that preceding.



Chicago Contest Decision Delayed

Although the *Photodramatist* had expected to announce in the present issue the winners of the Chicago Daily News scenario contest, no decision had been reached at the time this magazine went to press. Advice from Chicago indicates that the exceptional merit of the photoplays which, by process of elimination, have been passed up to the final judges makes selection of the winners an exceedingly difficult task. The editor believes, however, that the names of the fortunate screen writers will be available in time for publication in the April number.

"How Did Sarah Dress Her Hair?"

Accuracy of Detail Now Demanded by Public Brings
Scientists to Aid of Producers

By Edgar J. Banks, Ph. D.

RECENTLY in one of the largest of the New York theatres, I saw thrown upon the screen a reproduction of one of Solomon's buildings at Jerusalem. The construction of that particular building is fairly well known to archaeologists, and I was surprised to see that its walls were decorated with glazed lions taken from the walls of the palace of Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon. The heroine of the story was a character whose traditional name is well known, but in the play she bore a name far less picturesque. The city where she lived was in the interior of Southern Arabia, but it was placed on the sea coast of Persia. The heroine lived about 1000 B. C. but she was made the contemporary of a character who lived 600 years later and of another who lived a thousand years after she was dead. There was hardly a detail in the picture which would not be criticized by the Orientalist.

In another well known picture, the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, has been reproduced. This palace has been thoroughly excavated and the details of its architecture are familiar. In the picture the great throne room was decorated with immense columns and with elephants. But the throne room had no columns and never has an elephant appeared in Babylonian

sculpture. The only representation of an elephant in Assyrian or Babylonian art was one which was brought in payment of tribute to Assyria.

One day not long ago, the director of a motion picture concern in California

was talking with a clergyman who had been called in for advice. The picture to be made for the screen was a portrayal of the life of Abraham at Ur of the Chaldees, his marriage to Sarah, and his migration to Palestine. The clergyman had been called in to answer all questions regarding the customs of the times—what the people ate, what they wore, in what kind of houses they lived, and a thousand other questions which a clergyman is supposed to be able to answer. No efforts were to be spared to make the picture historically perfect in all details. The director asked:

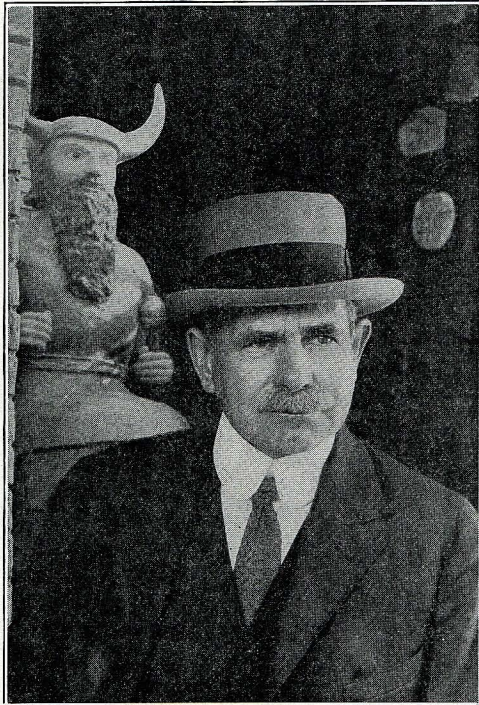
"How did Sarah dress her hair?"

The clergyman thought hard and knit his brow. The difficulties of his task began to appear. He repeated the question to himself,

"How did Sarah dress her hair?" but that did not answer it. Finally he shook his head and answered:

"I don't know, but I know someone who does."

It was then that I received a telegram to come to California to tell how Sarah dressed her hair. It happens that some



When the University of Chicago needed a leader for its Babylonian Research Expedition, it selected the author of this article, who is one of the world's foremost archaeologists. He is now employing his vast technical knowledge as research director for Sacred Films, Inc.

years ago, I was sent to Babylonia by the University of Chicago to search among the ruins of the buried cities. The ruin selected for excavation was that of a city which flourished at the time that Abraham lived. The city of Ur was located in a part of the desert which is now overrun by the most hostile of the Arab tribes. Its ruins have been seen by very few white men. Some years ago I visited the place. I walked about the city on the summit of its walls, climbed to the summit of the temple tower, carefully traced the streets in which Abraham must have played when he was a boy. Therefore, it was a simple thing to make a miniature of the city, to locate the temple, to show the canal, the residential quarters and the market place. Should Abraham himself come back he would recognize the miniature as that of his home. There was little difficulty in reconstructing the details, as for example, the temple with its different stages, the statues which adorned it, the moon god in the shrine at the summit, the altar, the votive stone vases and tablets. They were all reproduced from objects found in the ruins from Abraham's time. The only perfect house coming from the time of Abraham ever discovered was at Ur; it was a square structure with a flat roof still intact. In the ruins of the house were furnishings, and beneath the floors were the clay tablets or written documents of that age. There were little household images which the people worshipped, the toys, and even the rattles with which the babies played.

But how did Sarah dress her hair? In the ruin of Tello, another Babylonian city from the time of Abraham, there was found a large black diorite statue of a female. The hair was done up in a psyche knot at the back of the head and held in place by a bandeau over her forehead. The costume was a loose undergarment, above which was a gown almost modern in its shape. It was also easy to

deck out Sarah with the jewelry of her time. It used to be my special work when the graves were opened to gather up the dust into which the body had turned and sift it thru my fingers to rescue the jewelry buried with the dead. There were bronze ear rings, finger rings, armlets, anklets, and beads of various stones and shapes. The most striking adornment worn by the women was a long thin piece of gold, bound upon the forehead. It is almost certain that Sarah adorned herself with such an ornament.

It is very evident that people are beginning to desire greater accuracy in the settings of the pictures which are thrown upon the screen. The educational value is increased or diminished according to it. Should the architecture, and costumes and street scenes be wrong, the value of the picture as an educational factor, is less than nothing for it is difficult to eradicate false impressions. On the other hand, if the details are correct, there is imparted to the public a lesson in history, in architecture, in ancient social and business life, and in the evolution of civilization, which can be gained in no other way.

The science of archaeology is still young. Not many years ago it was generally conceded that the man who devoted his life to things of the remote past was as dry and fossilized as the objects he studied. But now it is different. The study of things ancient has become a science demanding universal respect. Not yet has the public become interested in ancient life and history, but when it is realized that the pictures on the screen are really accurate, public interest will not be wanting. To me it is an exceeding great privilege to assist in popularizing a most fascinating study, which cannot fail to broaden the mental horizon of those who have not been able to receive the benefits of a liberal education. And this important service can be rendered best by the accurate motion picture.



CONVERSATION is the art of keeping off the subject. Plot building is the art of keeping on the subject.

FLIRTATION has been defined as attention without intention. This might be applied to the way some folk approach photoplay writing.

The Elements of Dramatic Art

By George Wallace Sayre

RARE is the human being who has never felt an impulse to pretend he is someone or something else. The human being who has never felt pleasure in seeing such pretending is rarer still. Back through the ages of barbarism and civilization, in all tongues, we find this instinctive pleasure in the imitative action that is the very essence of all drama.

The instinct to impersonate produces the actor; the desire to provide pleasure by impersonations produces the dramatist; the desire to provide this pleasure with adequate characterization and plot, memorable in itself produces dramatic literature.

Though dramatic literature has been sporadic, dramatic entertainment by imitative action has been going steadily on since we first heard of it in connection with the Bacchic festivals of early Greece; and the dramatic instinct has been uninterruptedly alive since man's creation. We do not kill the drama, we do not really limit its appeal by failing to encourage the best in it; but we do thereby foster the weakest and poorest elements.

What is drama? Broadly speaking, it is whatever by imitative action rouses interest or gives pleasure. The earliest of the mediaeval plays, the trope of the church in which the three Mary's go to the tomb to find that Christ has risen, and make their way thence rejoicing, does not differentiate one Mary from another. The words, which were given to music, have only an expository value. Here, as through the ages succeeding, it is action and theme which count.

Goethe, Schiller, Hugo, Dumas père, and Alfred de Vigny revealed a new world of dramatic romance and history. But are the dramatists of today keeping trend with those whose laurels are written

down in history as the foremost in their art? Why is it, then, that out of the masses of photoplays put before the present-day public, only a few, such a very few in comparison to the hundreds made, live only once? Is it that the dramatists of today are getting so trite that they cannot originate more photoplays that mirror life by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, or a confessor predict the progress of the passions?

The public is very exacting in its demands, a hard task-master. To try to hit public taste in the photoplay is like trying to hit the bull's-eye of a rapidly shifting target on a foggy day. Yet there is a widespread interest of the people at

large, and men and women all over the country are busied with the difficult art of the Photodramatist. In turn, responsive to their needs, our colleges are developing courses in dramatic composition and photoplay writing is now being taught by correspondence.

To every dramatist comes sooner or later the question: "Shall I write so as surely to make money, pandering to the artistic and moral taste of my public; or shall I keep to my inculcated and self-discovered standards of dramatic art till I win my public to them?" For the latter result there must be a considerable part of the public which so understands and loves the best of the drama that it can quickly discover promise in the drama today. Out of the past come the standards for judging the present; standards in turn to be shaped by the practice of present-day photodramatists into broader standards for the next generation. The photodrama possesses a great literature growing out of an eternal desire of the race. The photodrama is a great revealer of life. Potentially, it is a social educative force of the

"From the Beginning

man has sought various means of expressing his inherent desires," says Mr. Sayre, in this unusual analysis of the drama. "The photoplay," he adds, "is the most perfect medium yet designed for the gratification of this fundamental instinct."

greatest possibilities, provided it be properly handled. You cannot annihilate it. Repressing it you bring its poorer qualities to the front.

Shakespeare, who, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life, should be studied earnestly by every screen writer. His Characters are not modified by the customs of particular places; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions; they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other dramatists a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species. But Shakespeare is immortal, he has given to the world at large drama that will last down the ages. His influence will yet mark the photodrama.

I believe that the greatest theme of photoplays is the love theme, and that the success of numerous plays embodying this theme will prove out the statement. On every stage, in both reel and real life, the universal agent is Love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and

every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a girl, and a rival into the story; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harass them with violence of desires inconsistent with each other; to make them meet in rapture and part in agony, to fill their mouths with joy and outrageous sorrow, to distress them, to deliver them—is the business if the dramatist.

One cannot please all the people all of the time, but we can please most of the people most of the time. We shall always have our long-haired critics who will lament upon the photoplay, no matter to what artistic heights it may rise; but if we can tend to divert and entertain, and at the same time to instruct and improve the minds of the youth of both sexes; if we can set forth in the most exemplary lights, the parental, the filial, and the social duties; if we can paint vice in its proper colors to make it deservedly odious; and set virtue in its own amiable light, and make it look lovely; if we can draw characters with justness and support them distinctly; and if we can put all these good ends in so probable, so natural, so lively a manner, as shall engage the emotions of every sensible theatergoer, then will we be more than able to also please that "few" of the public, and please them well.



Thought

By C. E. J. Widgery

Night is the time to think
When from the eyes the soul
Takes flight, and, on the utmost brink
Of yonder starry pole,
Discerns beyond the deep abyss of night
The dawn of uncreated light.



"A Camera Has No Ears"

To "Get Over" Your Photoplay Must be Told
in Terms of Action Only

By Alvin Wyckoff

THE question often arises, "Is it necessary for the cinematographer to know the story?" I say, "Yes, positively." And if he is a man who understands his business and is looking for success, he will insist on knowing the story intimately, not only in its original form, but in every change that takes place in it thereafter.

The author should try to cultivate the friendship of the cinematographer much more than is being done, for unless the story is very carefully handled after it leaves the author's hands and mind, little of his meaning is going to get over to the spectator. When I say, 'author', I mean that writer who puts his heart into his work, and not the so-called writer who is fed up on worthless egotism and is forever worshipping the dollar he is going to get for his result.

The author is seldom versed in the photographic mysteries, and so needs a little guiding here and there in order to make his story run smoother. For instance, what can be less entertaining than a scene between two or more people that sit, and stand, and look at each other, and speak a lot of magnificent lines filled with much oratory that is lost?

The camera has no ears! Therefore the spectator is forced to sit and look at a lot of footage that is absolutely de-

void of interest or telling action, which is nothing more than the wagging of a lot of mouths, and utterly meaningless. It thus becomes necessary for the audience to labor through a lot of titles that are not entertaining, because there is no action to stimulate the imagination. On

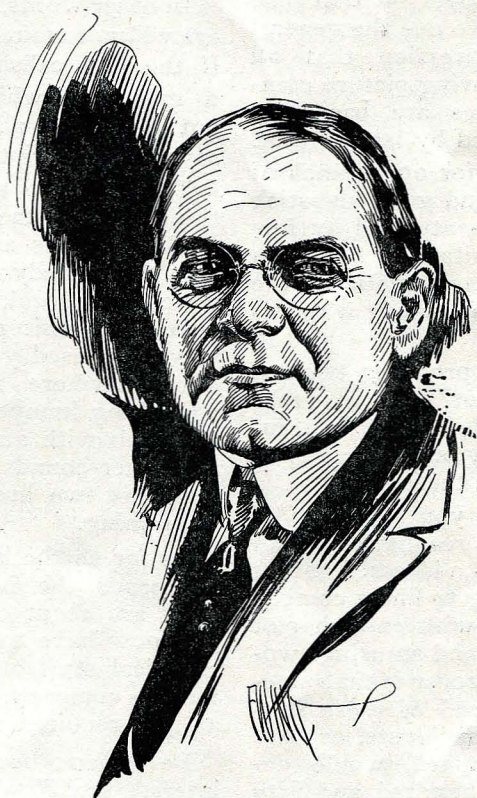
the other hand, the same idea could be put over much more convincingly with "action," with perhaps a dissolve or a vision, or a split screen, or numerous other tricks that are known to the cinematographer.

Photography is the author's carriage for conveying his idea to the audience, so why should he not be a little more interested than usual in what the cinematographer is going to do? Certainly, the author expects to write more than one story, and he should expect to make each one better than the one before. Then why neglect the vehicle that is going to carry it?

There was a time, and not so many years ago, when the directors had to write their own stories over night and "shoot" them the next day. And

some of them were very good. Why? Because the director knew, with the author's knowledge, the ideas he wanted to get over, so he and his cameraman were continually conferring as to the best methods of putting these ideas over. Now, we have the author work-

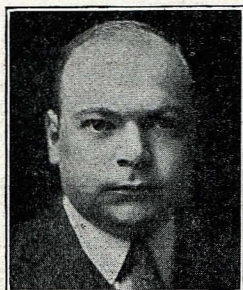
(Continued on page 40)



Alvin Wyckoff has "shot" probably more feature pictures than any cinematographer in the film world. His advice is constantly sought by writers at the Lasky Studios, for whom he is chief cameraman. What he has to say in these pages is worth careful consideration.

Real Stories for the Two-Reeler

By Frank R. Conklin, Scenario Editor, Christie Film Co.



Frank R. Conklin

A RECENT article in *The Photodramatist* by Harry R. Brand gave an interesting insight into the making of the slapstick comedy, but Mr. Brand erred in this respect — that he gave one the general impression that all moving picture comedies are based on

“gags” and distinguished by lack of plot.

This is all very well for one branch of the high comedy art, and good slapstick is art in itself which is attained by few comedians; but its limitations are seen in the fact that there has come up in the last few years a type of comedy which is based entirely on story.

In other words, the producer tries to “pack an awful lot of plot” into two reels, or more exactly, into about 1750 feet, including titles—for many of our best two-reel films do not exceed these limits.

I wish I could draw you a picture of our busy scenario staff, reading each and every scenario which is addressed to our company, eagerly trying to find a comedy with a new plot—and with enough plot to make an interesting and amusing two-reel story. Our wail forever is that ninety-nine out of a hundred of these submitted stories are but incidents, or bare ideas, which, photographed, would deserve no more than a hundred and fifty feet of film.

As scenario editor, I have ideas myself, lots of them. What I should like to have is the “working out” of one, or a new way to work out an old idea.

Al. Christie is one of the few comedy producers, who will consistently throw out a laugh in order to stick to a story, if it is a case of losing one or the other. This is just the reverse of the slapstick method, where the story is sacrificed for the laugh—however far-fetched in probability.

Of course, Mr. Christie goes on the theory that if the story is amusing

enough as a whole, the laughs or the chuckles or the smiles or whatever they are, will take care of themselves.

“Don’t try to be funny!” is one of his pet maxims, explained by the fact that if the situation is amusing, a typical “comedy” grimace will not help the action but harm it.

In other words, a “funny” set of whiskers will not make a two reel comedy, but if the plot calls for the proper use of a misplaced whisker, use the whisker but forget all about it and do what it says in the script.

This calls to mind one of the many things which the chance visitor to the studio marvels at, and that is the fact that the comedy director (of the type of which I am speaking) works with a scenario. The visitor exclaims, “Why, I always supposed you just took the actors out somewhere and then thought up something funny to do,” and he is stricken dumb with amazement when he sees a leather-bound volume of perhaps as many as two hundred scenes, all ready for filming.

As far as the light comedy people are concerned, the days of the backyard comedies are about over; which means that you now have to have about as good a technical staff and camera staff as any feature company, and most important of all, you require a *real story* of real people.

Be human, because it is the “human interest stuff” which counts nowadays.

Those of us who are engaged in furnishing two reels, or twenty minutes of light entertainment, in the best theatres everywhere are naturally very proud of our connection, and we are determined to make our fourth of the average film program hold its own from a standpoint of “class production”. If we are to keep on doing that we must discard the old worn-out comedy props and give the theatregoer something new in comedy. Whether it is slapstick or polite comedy, it is the new idea which will hold them the twenty minutes.

But it has to be a story!

"What's All the Shootin' For?"

By Violet Clark

THERE'S an old saying that where there's smoke, there must be fire, and there is a parallel truism that when there is a shot, there must be a target. In other words, nobody can deny that all good little scenario writers should be striving toward some end, and every story should be aimed at a target other than just the check at the end of the last reel.

But what is that target? In the language of the Broadway popular travesty, "What's all the shootin' for?"

First the story, or scenario, which is the shotgun used for shooting.

Did you ever have anyone pounce out upon you suddenly from a dark corner and demand, "Just what is a scenario?" There is no question which leaves you so absolutely flat and at a loss.

A few weeks ago I received a letter from a friend in Chicago in which she mentioned in an off-hand manner that school being out and not having much to do, she thought she might come out to California and do a little writing for the pictures. She remarked, not very complimentarily that if her friends could get away with it, she thought she could too, because she had gotten A in English last year at the University and she had done a little newspaper work which the editor pronounced without hesitation, "Fine!" She concluded with the request that I write her at once and tell her frankly "just what is a scenario or 'continuity'", so she could sit down and write one.

It was with great difficulty that I restrained myself from seizing a postal card and by return mail giving her some such insanely fictitious information as "a continuity is something which a scenario editor demands, a director doesn't want, the leading lady never sees, the prop man can't read, and the assistant always loses,"—and with this description advising her to go ahead and do her worst,

which she probably would do anyway.

But when you come down to plain facts, a great many people in the motion picture industry, including many scenario writers themselves, have just about the same idea of a scenario. And a great many people have somewhat the same confused impression of the picture when it's finished. There is no real idea of what all the shooting's for. The scenario writer writes because he's been told to put a story into continuity. The director goes upon the set and "shoots." And Mr. Public is branded as a Crank when he sees the picture, walks out of the theatre, and dares to inquire plaintively, "What's it all about? What's accomplished? What's all the shootin' for?"

Of course it is not possible for every picture to have a theme as big as the "Miracle Man", or the "Old Nest". But it *should* be possible to inject into every one a little more of backbone than merely a few passionate love scenes, or a camel on the desert.

It is true that the desire to entertain, and also to point out

certain truths, are legitimate targets. But the spectacular element will not carry on alone, neither will artificiality, however artistic it may be.

Many writers, especially beginners, have learned and are learning through bitter experience that the most expensive and elaborately-developed picture is not the most successful. A common theme, the human touch, an entertaining sense of humour, are targets which create much more logical reasons for shooting. And it is up to those of us who prepare the shotgun, to see that it is aimed straight at the bulls-eye.

Although a new writer is not always able to take matters into his own hands, and material is placed before him and he must work on it whether he sympathizes with it or not,—there is always something which he can do to help. It is my

To Achieve Success

a photoplay must be based upon a vital theme—must convey a real message to the world," says Violet Clark, whose own success as a scenario writer is ample proof of the truths she sets forth in this interesting, and timely, article for aspiring photodramatists.

firm opinion that he who is going to linger longest in this merry little game of "put and take," is that writer who realizes that much of the responsibility of the tomorrow of the industry lies with him.

The subject of the future motion picture industry is a matter of popular discussion. Some wonder pessimistically if there will *be* a future. Will the drama of the screen die a natural death, its more and more hackneyed stories fading out into a merciful oblivion? Or will its salvation lie in the pictorially effective, perhaps the colored pictures? Or is it possible that the talking apparatus will return to create novelty? It is natural to assume that as the years pass by, the stories at hand will be exhausted. The seven original plots will be twisted and turned into seven times seven and seventy times seventy. New photographic effects will be invented. Perhaps continuity will be governed by a new technique.

But all of this will be purposeless, unless the pictures themselves revolve around a central basis from which the spokes of Life extend and unless the wheel moves upon the same ordinary ground that Everybody in this old world is compelled to tread.

In other words, the secret of making

the photodrama secure is to make it deal with those things which *are* secure. Human impulse, every day problems, certain phases of comedy and sorrow are emotions which will never die. Thus anything which concerns these emotions will be always interesting.

If we all were only capable of taking the people whom we meet every day, walking in the ruts of their own lives and experiences, and lift these lives and experiences out of the rut just sufficiently to transfer them in an interesting manner to the screen—we would have achieved a target which could not help but endure. Rupert Hughes hit the mark in "Dangerous Curves Ahead", Rex Ingram and June Mathis in "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse", and Frances Marion in "Humoresque". Many of us are not quite prepared to do this, yet. Those who are discouraged and drop out, will *never* do it. Those who are sure that they recognize the need will do it as soon as they are ready, and the opportunity comes.

But the important fact is this—if there could be a common desire shared by all writers and would-be writers to deal with real people, to pull out of the rut, and aim at a target—there'd be no reason for ever worrying about "What's all the shootin' for?"



Photoplay

By W. Arthur Williams

Hopes, fears;
Smiles, tears;
Rising, subsiding;
Ever in motion;
Humanity riding
A fathomless ocean.



EVERYTHING in Life is cumulative. The little that you learn today, added to what you learned yesterday, and what you will tomorrow, will finally make you a master of your subject.

From Pen to Silversheet

By Melvin M. Riddle

IV—FILMLAND'S FASHION SHOP

ARTISTIC motion pictures call for characteristic settings and investiture, perfect photography, appropriate costumes and beautiful gowns for the feminine star or principals. Hardly a picture is now produced which does not contain some scenes in which such feminine star or principals are shown elaborately and gorgeously gowned. Gowns and women's fashionable dress have become recognized as an attractive feature of any good picture, and the situation has now reached the point where milady never attends a motion picture show without taking close observation of the gowns, hats and other fashions worn by the feminine members of the cast. She has come to realize the care exercised in preparing these gowns, their exclusiveness of design and their originality of style.

Thus it is that that studio department which devotes itself to the creation and fabrication of women's fashions has become one of the most important; it is one of the most interesting and in the larger film plants, it presents a most convincing proof of the rapid strides which have been made in modern film production. The fashion department, as it may be termed, is much the same as any large dressmaking and designing establishment. It is complete within itself and operates under its own organization, synchronizing its work, of course, with the demands of the directors and players, as in the case of all other studio departments.

The fashion department of the Lasky studio is one of the largest and most striking examples of what constitutes a modern studio dressmaking branch. This organization, under the supervision of Ethel Chaffin, chief fashion designer for Paramount Pictures produced at the

Lasky studio, occupies the entire second floor of the large concrete building, the lower floor of which, as mentioned in a previous article, contains the character wardrobe.

One hundred to a hundred and twenty-five girls and women are employed at all times and the gowns worn by all the principals and extras are designed and finished for use. Illustrative of the capacity of this unique department is the fact that three thousand gowns were designed and finished in the workrooms during 1920, for use in Paramount Pictures. This represents a daily average of about nine new gowns.

Motion Pictures Exert

a tremendous influence upon the styles of the American people. Mr. Riddle's "inside view" on the manner in which play-folk are gowned is certain to interest readers of *The Photodramatist*. Another article of this fascinating series will appear next month.

Five distinct branches comprise the fashion department. These are the dressmaking room, the stock rooms, the finished wardrobe, the millinery shop and the fancy costume shop. The stock rooms contain the materials to be used in the gowns, hats etc., the finished wardrobe is a long room filled with hangers, drawers and shelves wherein are stored

and hung the finished gowns and hats and other fashion accessories, such as bags, shoes, furs, plumes, etc. In the dressmaking room are something like thirty or forty sewing machines operated by expert seamstresses; also a number of designers, cutters and fitters, who carry out the instructions of Mrs. Chaffin, the chief designer. In the millinery shop are the designers and makers of new styles in hats. Many pictures call for fancy costumes such as for a masque ball scene or period wardrobe. These are designed and made up in the fancy costume department. All of these separate branches are under the direct supervision of Mrs. Chaffin.

For almost every feminine principal in nearly every picture produced, several

gowns are necessary. This means a continual production of new and original designs, as no gown which has ever been worn previously by a principal can be worn by the same principal or any other principal in a later picture. The gowns, after being finished with by the principals in any one picture are remodelled and hung in the finished wardrobe to be assigned to extras in large ballroom and social scenes in later pictures. But even this stock must be disposed of after being used only a very few times.

One of the most talked-of sales in the history of feminine fashion was held recently at the Lasky fashion department and some three or four hundred gorgeous creations were sold to the public at ridiculously cheap prices. These had been used to their screen limit and although still in excellent condition—some them being almost brand new—they had to be disposed of as they were no longer available for screen use. This was a decided proof of the practicability and genuineness of the gowns which are designed and made up for Paramount Pictures. They could be worn in real life just as well and were made of the most beautiful and genuine materials.

A further example of the genuineness of these gowns as designed for use before the camera is the fabulous cost of some of the creations of this department. A gown worn by Gloria Swanson in her Paramount Picture, "The Great Moment," which contained thousands of pearls and a large strip of ermine, cost three thousand dollars. Another worn by Miss Swanson in the same picture—a negligee of black velvet—was valued at one thousand dollars. The Chinese costumes worn by Betty Compson in her first Paramount vehicle, from the play, "At the End of the World," represented an outlay of from three hundred to seven hundred dollars each.

All designs by Mrs. Chaffin are absolutely original. This is the only way to keep in advance of the style. It must be remembered that a picture is not released for the screen until about five or six months after its production. Therefore, the styles worn by the feminine players in the picture must be several months ahead, so that by the time the picture is released no worn-out styles will be seen in the new pictures. The gowns must also be

absolutely appropriate for the characterization in the picture in question. They must be just as expensive or just as plain as the occasion demands.

Some months ago Mrs. Chaffin made a trip to Paris, Rome and London, for the purpose of looking over new materials and getting new advance ideas. The beneficial results of this trip are being seen in the gowns which the players are wearing in new Paramount Pictures, most of which gowns are of exquisite design and material. While abroad she secured many accessories, the majority of which will not be on the market for some months to come. One of these was a supply of monkey fur which she obtained after searching London and Paris and which is being seen as a gorgeous coat worn by Gloria Swanson in "The Husband's Trademark," an original photoplay written by Clara Beranger.

In making a gown, Mrs. Chaffin begins with the materials and a dress form. She drapes the materials about the form until she obtains a new and striking effect, then pins it in place and gives her instructions to her assistants. No pattern is made except in the case of tailored fashions. A pattern serves to spoil the originality of a gown, giving it a stiff and stereotyped appearance. The gown, after being cut and put together, is fitted to the player for whom it is intended, but so efficient has become the department that any altering is very rarely necessary.

The fashion department of the studio differs principally from any exclusive dressmaking establishment, only in the amount of time used in turning out a new creation. Where the average exclusive shop would take a week or more, Mrs. Chaffin and her staff will perfect a design and make the gown in a much shorter time, ranging all the way from several hours to two or three days. Speed in this as in other departments, is essential. The director must not be delayed by uncompleted gowns and they must be ready on schedule time. At the time this article was written, Mrs. Chaffin had orders for five new gowns for a well-known star, to be worn in a new picture. The time limit allowed her for the designing and completion of these five new gowns was about two days and she was just preparing to begin her work.





Gossip Street

From Hollywood Boulevard to Times Square



CAREY WILSON has recently sold to Goldwyn an original photoplay which bears the provocative title, "Women Love Diamonds." The story is said to introduce a new idea in scenario technique. Another original, "Captain Blackbird," a romance of the South Seas, was recently purchased by Goldwyn from the same author, who has arrived from New York to join their scenario staff. Mr. Wilson has been writing for only a year and a half, but has already sold nine screen stories.

THE Louis Burston Company, Universal City, favor originals. Their first picture is starring Bessie Love and Gareth Hughes. The story is by Henry B. Symonds and John B. Clymer.

"FIGHTIN' MAD," an original by H. H. Van Loan, according to all reports, is going over big. It is the story of a cowboy, Buck McGraw, who rides like fury, fights like a demon, and loves like blazes.

THAT there is a widespread interest in photoplay writing is shown by the crowded houses which greeted H. H. Van Loan in San Diego, where he lectured on the principles of writing for the screen.

ONE OF the latest Pola Negri pictures is "The Last Payment," a story written expressly for this star by John Brenkert and George Jacoby.

GEORGE FITZMAURICE will go to Egypt for the exterior scenes of his next picture, which is based on an original story by Ouida Bergere.

WILL PAYNE'S first original story written directly for the screen has recently been completed. It is called, "The Truthful Liar," and features Wanda Hawley. Mr. Payne came to motion pictures with the idea that the films were not proving sufficiently attractive to men; that the masculine theatergoers craved stories with a real live business background, all of which he endeavored to give them in this story.

AN original story by Jules Furthman, called, "In the Land of Beginning Again," is being produced by Fox.

"SKIN DEEP" is an original story by Marc Edmund Jones, which has been adapted to the screen by Lambert Hillyer. It is now being produced at the Ince Studios.

JOSEPH FRANKLIN Poland has written a story for Eileen Percy, which is called "Elope if You Must."

"PETERMAN," the first screen story from the pen of America's prisoner-author, Louis Victor Eytinge, has recently been completed by Universal.

"TOP O' THE MORNIN'" an original story by Ann Caldwell, will be the next starring vehicle for Gladys Walton.

BELIEVING "Hail the Woman" to be one of the finest examples of photoplay plot composition and scenario construction produced during the past year, the educational department of the Palmer Photoplay Corporation, Los Angeles, viewed this picture for the purpose of studying it. The party, numbering almost 200, included professional scenarists, studio editors, students of the Palmer Course, and members of the headquarter's staff.

"THE INDIAN DRUM," by Edwin Balmer, is a picture on which production will soon start at Ince Studios. Irvin Willat is writing the scenario. The story is founded on an Indian legend of Lake Michigan, and is said to very dramatic.

SOPHIE IRENE LOEB is writing a photoplay for Jackie Coogan.

"THE CAT THAT WALKED ALONE," is the intriguing title of a story by John Colton that is being filmed by Lasky's. It was adapted to the screen by Will M. Ritchey.

VIOLET CLARK has put over another original. "Conquer the Woman" is the name of the story. Katherine MacDonald will star in the picture.

FRANCES Marion wrote the script for "The Snowshoe Trail," Jane Novak's next starring production. The story is by Edison Marshall.

CECIL de Mille stated recently that after working on the production of "Saturday Night," an original by Jean MacPherson, he

(Continued on page 40)



Little Hints for Screen Writers

The editor will be pleased, at all times, to discuss on this page any problem which readers of *The Photodramatist* may suggest to him.

TO BE successful a photoplay must be logical and realistic. Consequently, motivation is one of the important fundamentals of screen drama. The poorly motivated story must inevitably be unconvincing. The law of "cause and effect" governs photodrama, just as it governs the world at large. To paraphrase a popular advertisement, "there must be a reason" for everything your characters do. It is well to remember, however, that motivation which is forced, or obvious, will defeat its own ends. Do not "drag in" incidents merely to bolster up an otherwise weak situation. Test each and every motivating incident by asking yourself not, "COULD such a thing happen?" but, "WOULD such a thing happen?" Many things which are possible are far from probable.

WHILE it is best, in molding screen characters, to exaggerate them slightly, by emphasizing certain traits upon which the drama might depend, never lose sight of the fact that they must appear to your audience as human beings. Even though you select a drab, commonplace person as your lead, be sure to endow him with sufficient "humanness" to make him appear REAL so that the spectator will be interested in following his career. The persons of the play must always be interesting although some of them may not be unusual in themselves. The motion picture in which the characters seem unreal, products of shadowland only, will not meet with public favor.

DON'T throw your rejected stories away. Oft-times, the discouraged photoplay writer, following repeated rejection of a cherished manuscript, will consign it to the fireplace as an impossibility upon which he wishes to waste no more time. Granting that he may be correct in this opinion, there is always the chance that the discarded scenario may contain material which,

when the writer has had more training and experience, may be worked over and incorporated into a really successful screen drama. Poor indeed is the film story that does not possess at least one or two valuable bits of material; and, as often happens, there may be a "plot germ" lurking in the rejected filmplay of yours which, in the years to come, will well repay you for the labor spent in revamping it.

DEVELOP characterization, whenever possible, by letting the actions of your characters themselves give an insight into their ideals, general mental makeup, and attitude toward the world at large. For instance, a subtitle reading, "Hank Sloman, brutal foreman of the Bar-X Ranch," will not be nearly so convincing as a subtitle reading merely, "Hank Sloman, foreman of the Bar-X Ranch," supplemented by an opening "shot" of Hank himself in the act of kicking a puppy or whipping a jaded horse. In scenario writing, as in other professions, it is the little touches that count; and some very effective characterizations can be worked out by attention to small bits of action by members of the cast of your photoplay, when introduced into the drama.

THE wise photoplaywright will make no attempt to appeal directly to the emotions of his audience. At all times, any such appeal must be made indirectly through the characters of the picture itself. Let the audience gain emotional thrill from the reaction upon the actors of the situations in your story, and the drama will seem more realistic. Thrill gained by trickery—by deceiving the spectator—is bound to reflect unfavorably. The public likes to be fooled; but does not wish to be told, at the end of the story, that it "wasn't true, after all." Such an impression is bound to result, unless the spectators follow the plot through the eyes of one of the persons of the play.

Comment from Student Writers

A monthly department to which students are invited to contribute

"STORY" THE THING

By Allen Laughton

Many writers for magazines and newspaper reporters are constantly making fun of the ambitious student by such remarks as, "Your chance for becoming a screen writer is practically nil, for at least one half of the people in the United States are your competitors." And in the next paragraph they will praise a box office production with no story merit whatever.

Skilled directors are producing such plays because they lack a better story. The public, however, is getting tired of pretty stars and is demanding more C. Gardner Sullivans, who write from the heart, with both eyes on the story, oblivious to the box office, which will take care of itself if human nature is truly portrayed.

The student should not use a mediocre play as his model, but should analyze and detect its weak points, that he may convert that same weakness into a source of strength in the construction of his own play.

Aim high, and write a story that will stand unassisted by renowned stars, if you expect to walk in the sunny heights of achievement.

FACTS OR FICTION?

By Caroline Fisher Sawyer

In reading my January number of the Photodramatist, I was struck by a paragraph asking, "Why do so many young potential photodramatists chose as their first effort the story of their own lives?" I did not know that this was the case, but I think I can shed some light on the reason for it.

I have read many articles containing advice to young writers, and in nearly all of them I have found something like the following: "Don't write about foreign countries where you have never been. If you are rich, don't write about the poor. If you are poor, don't write about the rich. Stick to life, as you have seen it."

If one took this advice literally, what would happen? A conscientious beginner, anxious to profit by the words of wisdom falling from the pens of the successful, would naturally turn to his own life and expect to reap a rare harvest. The obvious question is: "How can we write, if we never write about our own lives and never write about imaginative fancies?" These are direct contradictions. Nevertheless, I think there is truth in both concepts; and it seems to me that if we take each piece of advice halfway we shall land somewhere. In other words, take facts out of life to build your story upon, but don't write a history of your life. Then embellish these facts with fiction. Build up and round out your story until it is a whole. Facts out of life are never, or rarely, complete stories and can always be improved upon. If you start out with something you really know about, you are more apt to draw your story to a logical conclusion. But don't be afraid to change your characters and make your situations truly dynamic.

WHY NOT NEW HORIZONS?

By Edward H. Hanigan

While watching the scene of the Argentine dance hall as shown in Metro's "Four Horsemen," I was lifted out of the humdrum into a foreign atmosphere. Here was a bit of life, new, entertaining, a touch of the unusual. I wonder how many of us know anything of the Argentine, save some vague school day ideas?

Why not, when writing, seek fresh fields? Why not emulate in a sensible way, Kipling, when he wrote of that new, unheard-of India of his; or that Frenchman, who discovered in a literary sense Siam and Japan? To blaze new trails, gain new fields, horizons, to acquire by every means in our power, intimate, interesting knowledge of strange peoples; to catch the picturesque and mirror it on the screen. Perhaps some of us know the every-day life of Andalusia, Portugal, or the white man's existence in say, the Andaman Isles? It is not so much a striving after the foreign, as a sure-to-good touch of the intimate, of things unusual and peoples out-of-the-common. It might be that an Old Mexico Sonora cock-pit would be a more alluring environment for your heroine or hero than the old seen-a-hundred-times small town barn.

Of course, I know it's not feasible for anyone to become a walking encyclopaedia of facts—which are useless! It does one little good to know that Chinese coolies fight fatal duels with their naked forefingers as stabbers; that—perhaps—Russians take their tea out of straws in tall glasses; or that cabs in Bombay have white roofs, or that Anne Boleyn possessed two little fingers on her left hand!

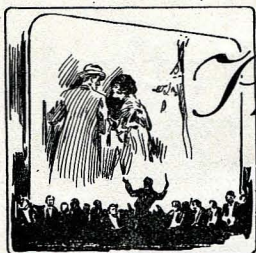
Yet, will not a sane seeking after the out-of-the-ordinary perhaps set one upon the broad pathway leading to success?

THE CHEERFUL PHOTOPLAY

By Evelyn E. Bowen

I cannot agree with the article on page eleven of the December Photodramatist, which states that the American love of cheerful photoplays with happy endings is the result of "racial decadence" or "spiritual cowardice." To my mind, it is the result of American optimism, the modern tendency to look persistently on the bright side of life. I consider it a fine characteristic of the nation—the same characteristic that won the war and made the American people what they are today. Is this cowardice? Rather, it is plain common sense—the spirit of eternal youth and hope, without which no life can be successful.

It seems to me that the happy ending often requires greater skill on the part of the author than the tragic ending. When you get your characters into a tight place, it is easy, of course, to let them die there; but it is not cleverer, and often just as artistic, to extricate them?



Photoplays in Review

by the Staff



"Hail The Woman"

Reviewed by Mabel Odell

Comment: The story is founded upon a compelling theme—intolerance in a narrow-minded, New England community. Its appeal is universal, because it is a specific study of the present day attitude toward women in such environment. The characterizations directly embody this thought. There is Oliver Beresford, himself, the stern father and husband. He is "MAN," spelled in capitals, who by "divine right" sits at ease in the parlor while his wife and daughter scrub the kitchen floors. His only joy is in his son, and his only defeat comes when this son—whom he worships—turns out to be common clay.

Judith, the daughter, typifies youth and virtue. She can look beyond the forbidding horizon of Flint Hill, to "dream dreams" of better things. Fortified by her innocence, but defying meaningless conventions, she defies her father, finally, and goes forth into the world. Her mother, wistful, weakened from constant suppression, but inherently true, is more to be pitied than blamed. She is the victim of Puritan tyranny, and too old to break the chains that bind her.

Nan, the third character, exemplifies the endurance of woman for the sake of a loved child. Crushed in the maelstrom of life, she clings with grim determination to her baby, and eventually makes the supreme sacrifice.

The son, already mentioned, is not so weak a character as might be thought. He, too, is the victim of a vicious social system, and his father's attitude is largely to blame for the youth's outlook upon the world.

The drama leads logically from situation to situation, growing in power until the climax is attained. The judicious use of comedy-relief lends to its dramatic quality. Essentially, this is a human story—the kind that stirs the hearts of the audience—and if there were more like it there would be less criticism of the motion pictures.

Synopsis: Oliver Beresford, a pillar of the church in the little New Hampshire village of Flint Hill, is as harsh and unyielding as the soil from which he sprang. Secure in his self-righteousness, he rules his household with a rod of iron. His wife is a meek little soul, absolutely under his dominance. David, his son, on whom his ambition centers, has possibilities of real manhood, but he also bows to his father's will in all things and David is destined by his father for the foreign mission field. Judith, his daughter, is a splendid creature who longs for the education denied her by her father because she is a woman. Her

father has planned that she marry a well-to-do young farmer of Flint Hill, Joe Hurd by name, a coarse-grained, mean-souled man, whom Judith detests. David has fallen in love and secretly married Nan, the stepdaughter of Flint Hill's Odd Jobs man. Her stepfather discovers that Nan is to have a child. He frightens her into a confession that David is responsible, but she does not tell of their marriage, for David has sworn her to secrecy. The Odd Jobs man forces Nan to go with him to the Beresford home and tell her story. David keeps silent as to their marriage and Oliver Beresford gives the Odd Jobs man one thousand dollars to send Nan away from Flint Hill. Judith is horrified at this, her first glimpse of man's terrible injustice to woman. Wyndham Gray, a well-known playwright is spending the summer in Flint Hill's fashionable summer colony. He meets Judith and his interest in her grows into an innocent friendship based on their love for books. Joe Hurd seeing her leave Gray's cabin late one evening, suspects the worst, and mad with jealousy denounces her to her father. Her father believes her guilty and Judith, in a passion of resentment at the injustice done her, leaves her home the next day for New York. Nan's baby boy whom she names David, is born in New York and Nan is forced to the streets to earn a living for him. Her health fails and just as she is at the end of her strength, Judith comes upon her.

Judith on her arrival in New York, finds a position in a store and does well. She becomes interested in the work of a neighborhood Settlement House and an errand, undertaken by her for one of the Settlement workers on Christmas Eve brings her to Nan. Nan dies after telling Judith the story of her marriage and Judith promises to care for little David. In the next eighteen months, David enters the ministry. Judith prospers. She meets Dick Stuart in her settlement work and they fall in love. There is a church conference of the denomination to which Oliver Beresford belongs, held in New York. He and David are sent as delegates and there the ambition of his life is gratified, for David is appointed to one of the mission posts in China. Dick Stuart's mother, an ardent church worker, meets David and his father and invites them to her home and there they are presented to Judith who is introduced as Dick Stuart's wife-to-be. Oliver Beresford denounces her, denying the truthful story she has told the Stuarts that David is her brother's child. Judith decides she will go to Flint Hill to fight for her good name and for the infant David's right to a name. She tells Dick Stuart that when the battle is won, she will return to him.

When she arrives, her father orders her out of the house, but her mother revolts and unexpectedly takes a firm stand and demands that justice be done Judith and little David. David is to preach his farewell sermon that evening and all Flint Hill has gone to church. Mrs. Beresford follows David and his father to church and ushers Judith and little David into the Beresford pew. A few moments later, little David, unnoticed, wanders up the aisle and up the pulpit steps. When David rises to preach he feels a tug at his coat and looks down into the eyes of his little son. One glance at Judith's face tells him what he subconsciously knows—that the child is his son. David lifts his son in his arms, tells his friends and neighbors the truth about Nan and himself and resigns from the ministry. Oliver Beresford is a broken man, but through the love of little David learns to live life on the terms it should be lived.

Clay Dollars

Reviewed by Laura Jansen

Comment: The plot in this story is very slight but there are many good comedy touches that relieve an otherwise rather ordinary story. The sequence where the prohibition officer sticks his hands in the mud, thinking it is brew, is good. The scene where the hero is taken to jail and the sheriff cannot find the key, is also good. Of course, most characters are burlesqued, but are wholesome and entertaining and typical of small town life. The titles help the story along, since they are humorous. It is a light, entertaining little story which never strikes any high lights and is in every way a program picture.

Synopsis: When his uncle dies, Bruce Edwards finds that he is heir to several acres of swamp lands. Therefore he decides to visit Pomona and investigate for himself.

June, the pretty daughter of his uncle's old friend falls in love with him.

Bruce goes to work at the local hotel. He beats Willett's son at pool and they become enemies, since the village Beau Brummel wants to marry June. Bruce, with the aid of Pete, an orphan, gets several pails of mud from his swamps and starts to have it analyzed. Squire Willetts finding that the villagers go often to Bruce's room, reports him to a prohibition officer but the latter, upon investigating, finds nothing but clay.

The Squire manages to read the telegrams Bruce had had sent to him and becomes interested in the swamp lands. On the night of the barn dance, he asks Bruce to come to his office and there offers him fifteen hundred dollars cash for the land. The village bum, peering in, sees the Squire show Bruce the money. The young man refuses to close the deal, returns to the dance and proposes to June. She accepts him.

A little later, the Squire finds his office wrecked and the money gone. He accuses Bruce, who is put in jail.

While he is gone, several men visit the swamps and one of them, claiming that he is the head of a big terra cotta firm, says the land is worth twenty-five thousand dollars.

Squire Willetts and his followers have come to the swamps as soon as they have heard the city men are there.

When they get back to the village, they find Bruce on the steps of the jail. Willetts offers to withdraw his charge if Bruce will accept seven thousand dollars for the land. Just then Pete brings his step-father, on whom he has found what remains of the money after the man has spent part of it on drink.

Bruce refuses the money but offers to trade his uncle's farm back, insisting that the swamp land is worthless. The deal goes through, Bruce marries June. Willetts gets an engineer to work on the land and is told it is worthless. He wants the sheriff to arrest Bruce but the latter says Bruce said the land was no good and cannot be arrested. The train recedes, carrying the lovers away while Willetts and his son watch it go, in hopeless despair that they have been foiled.

Forever

Reviewed by Elizabeth Niles

Comment: For attention to atmosphere, artistic settings, and minute details, combined with wonderful acting, this picture would be difficult to surpass. It has all the rhythm and delicacy of a poem; it holds one as the ever changing light in the evening sky. Yet the story, if you must push through to actualities, is very conventional and slight, and entirely undramatic. Consequently the picture would appeal only to that small class among all modern spectators, who enjoy the fanciful and beautiful.

Synopsis: In France lived, as very congenial neighbors, two families, each with a small child, Gogo the boy and Mimsi the girl. When Gogo's parents suddenly died, his uncle took him to England to raise him as a man of the world. The older he grew, Gogo objected more and more to the life his uncle wished him to lead. Finally Gogo left his uncle's home and went to work for himself. One night at the opera he saw his childhood's sweetheart, now the Duchess of Towers. Drawn by old memories he visited their old home in France; Mimsi had also felt a similar longing and they met and renewed their love. Returning to England, Gogo one night was induced to enter the dressing room of a dancer who was a flame of his uncle's. When the uncle entered, a quarrel followed and in the course of it the uncle cast a slurring remark about Gogo's mother. Though separated at the time, Gogo followed his uncle to his home and there, when the uncle was about to knife him, Gogo struck and killed his uncle. For this he was imprisoned and sentenced to death. Mimsi, however, who was by now divorced from her drunken husband, secured him a pardon and came to visit him just once in the prison. After that they spent their nights together in their dreams, visiting all parts of the world and living together in their dream palace. Then one night she was burned to death in an orphanage fire. Gogo saw her in his dream and tried to break out of his prison, but after a long, hard struggle with the jailers, his heart failed him and he joined Mimsi in the beyond.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Concerning the Writing of Photoplays

Q.—I cannot understand why coincidence is not considered good dramatic material. It seems to me that things that happen unexpectedly are dramatic.—W. B.

A.—Coincidences often have the effect of drama. When something occurs at the psychological moment, we are almost sure to hear someone exclaim: "Isn't that wonderful! Just like a play!" But it is like a poorly constructed play; for drama is built of logical events that are brought about by the desires and purposes of characters. Every step must be preceded by a reason and followed by a logical result. You will see many infringements of this rule; but if you want to write good, strong drama, avoid "the bolts from the blue" and have your story a well-linked chain of events.

Q.—Will you please explain to me the objection to the reminiscent form for screen stories?—N. T.

A.—The reminiscent form destroys the illusion that we are looking at actual happenings. We are seeing the events through the eyes of the one who is recounting the story, and we are not certain of how much of it really happened and how much of it is the product of the story-teller's imagination. If the reminiscence is only part of the screen story, cutting into the main body, it causes a break which weakens the dramatic structure.

Q.—I have viewed on the screen, "The Old Nest," "Love Never Dies" and "Lying Lips." Each of these photoplays contains a spectacular scene. The first contains a head-on collision on a bridge and both trains fall down a precipice. In the second, as the train was going over a bridge, the bridge broke and the train fell into the river below. In the third, the steamship strikes on a mine and is sunk. Were these spectacular scenes real? Explain how these spectacular scenes are done.—A. S. A.—It is possible that these scenes were filmed from actual wrecks, but not probable. As a general rule, train wrecks and shipwrecks are filmed from miniature models. By bringing the camera close to the miniatures, the same effect is attained as from filming the actual wrecks, without the enormous expense of demolishing real bridges, trains and ships. The process of photographing from small models is quite complicated and space does not permit a detailed explanation of the same.

Q.—What do producers mean by "synopsis"? Is there any place where one can secure a model synopsis?—H. D. P.

A.—A synopsis is the story from which a photoplay continuity is made. In writing a synopsis, one sets down, in sequence, the action of the drama, together with such explanation regarding characters and locale as is actually necessary. Model synopses are included in courses on scenario writing given by some of the best correspondence schools in photoplay writing.

Q.—Is it necessary to have literary style in writing the detailed synopsis of a photoplay?—R. V.

A.—Literary style is not an essential, though it is well to tell your story in a fashion that will interest the reader and present the dramatic moments in such a way as to make the reader feel the power and strength of the story. You must first have a screen plot, but instead of having it cold and lifeless, you can give it warmth and life by a careful choice of words.

Q.—I have a story in which the hero works out his destiny according to the laws of the planets. Is this attractive and novel?—A. T. M.

A.—It is a bit novel, but attractive only to those who are interested in the subject of an individual being governed by such laws. It is lacking in universal appeal. The successful photoplay should deal with themes and emotions that are fundamental, and understood by the great majority of the mixed audience of the moving picture.

Q.—Does mental conflict mean the struggle of a character with his conscience?—S. P.

A.—Not necessarily. Such a conflict is very difficult to convey on the screen, but mental conflict is more often used to convey a battle between opposed minds or wills. A conflict of purpose would be mental, as distinguished from the more physical forms of conflict.

Q.—I am frequently told that the different situations I create are time worn and hackneyed. How can I tell these old situations and how can I help myself to create new ones?—M. B.

A.—This is a question that we are frequently asked and it is a common one with new writers. As a matter of fact, originality of treatment seems to come with experience, more or less instinctively. There is a reason for this: The new writer is too apt to plunge into a story idea that may occur to him, without pausing to think whether he has seen the same idea before or not. A very obvious plot idea naturally leads to the same series of situations, all more or less alike. As an example; take the idea of two young men who work in a bank, both of them in love with the president's daughter. The amateur writer knows that somehow or another the 'good' one must marry the girl while the 'bad' one must not. What then more natural than to conceive the idea of having the bad one rob the bank? To add complications the villain alters the books so that the blame falls on the hero. Then the writer realizes that he has to get the hero cleared in some way and again what more natural than to let the girl be the means of clearing him. This is merely a crude example to show how an old idea is apt to lead the writer into the same old situations. Had he paused to think he would have seen that there are dozens of ways that the story could have been handled without the villain faking the entries so that they showed against the hero. The trouble is that the average amateur does not pause to think, he grasps at the obvious and for this reason he produces hackneyed material.



“Why, *I* could write a better story than that!”

Thousands say that, just as *you* have said it dozens of times

Perhaps you could

THE motion picture industry extends a genuine welcome to you to *try*; and offers you fame and fortune if you succeed.

The industry faces the most serious shortage of photoplays in its history. It needs, and will liberally pay for, 2000 good scenarios. Not mere ideas, not patchworks of incident and action, but connected, workable stories for the screen. It is because the studios cannot obtain sufficient good

material that so many thousands of patrons are criticizing so many of the pictures shown.

And it may be that you, who can tell a good from a bad picture, can help.

“But,” you say, “I am not a writer. I am only a housewife—or a salesman”—or whatever you are.

C. Gardner Sullivan, who started life as a farmer boy, might have looked at it that way, too. But he didn’t. He tried; and now his income is \$2000 a week. He was not a “born” writer. But he discovered that he had creative imagination, a sense of dramatic values. The rest was a simple matter of training.

A nation-wide search for story-telling ability

Here and there among the millions of men and women who attend the picture shows the essential talent for photoplay writing exists. And the Palmer Photoplay Corporation, with the co-operation of leading motion picture producers, has undertaken to locate it. By means of a novel and intensely interesting questionnaire, prepared by expert scenario writers, it is able to detect the latent ability in any person who will seriously apply the test. If the subject interests you, you are invited to avail yourself of this free examination.

The Palmer Photoplay Corporation is primarily an agency for the sale of photoplays to producers. Its Department of Education is a training school for scenario writers—a school that selects its students through the test applied by this questionnaire. Unless new writers are trained there will be no scenarios for us to sell, nor plays for the studios to produce.

In the three years of its existence the Palmer Corporation has trained many scenario writers and sold many of their photoplays. You have sat spellbound in your theatre and witnessed the work of Palmer students which was written in farm houses, city flats, and mining camps.

And the same studios that produced and paid for those pictures have rejected scenarios submitted by novelists and magazine writers whose names are known wherever the language is spoken.

The acquired art of fine writing cannot be transferred to the screen. But the native gifts, creative imagination and dramatic instinct—which means vivid story telling—are the life and the soul of the motion picture industry. Trained to express themselves in the language of the screen, these gifts are priceless to their possessor.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS OUR GUIDE

to the talent we seek. It was prepared by Prof. Malcolm MacLean, former instructor of short-story writing in Northwestern University, and Mr. H. H. Van Loan, the celebrated photoplaywright. It is a simple test which you may apply to yourself, to determine whether you have the essentials for successful scenario writing—imagination and dramatic insight. Before undertaking to train applicants in the new art of photoplay writing, we measure their aptitude for the work through this questionnaire.

It is a simple test which you can apply to yourself in your own home.

YOU ARE INVITED TO APPLY OUR TEST TO YOURSELF

We will gladly send you the Palmer questionnaire upon request. Answer, to the best of your ability, the questions in it, and we will tell you frankly what the record reveals to us.

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Gossip Street

(Continued from page 33)

now prefers the original story written directly for the screen, in place of the novel or short story which has been adapted.

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BERNARD McConville, one of the best known scenario writers on the west coast, collaborated with Director Emmet J. Flynn in the preparation of the story, "Shame," which has recently been released.

The Screen Drama League

(Continued from page 8)

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"A Camera Has No Ears"

(Continued from page 27)

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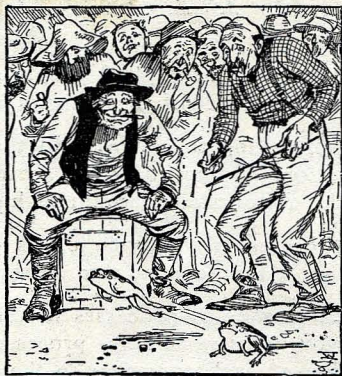
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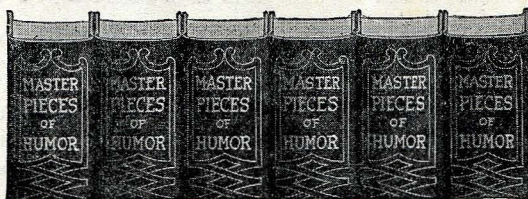
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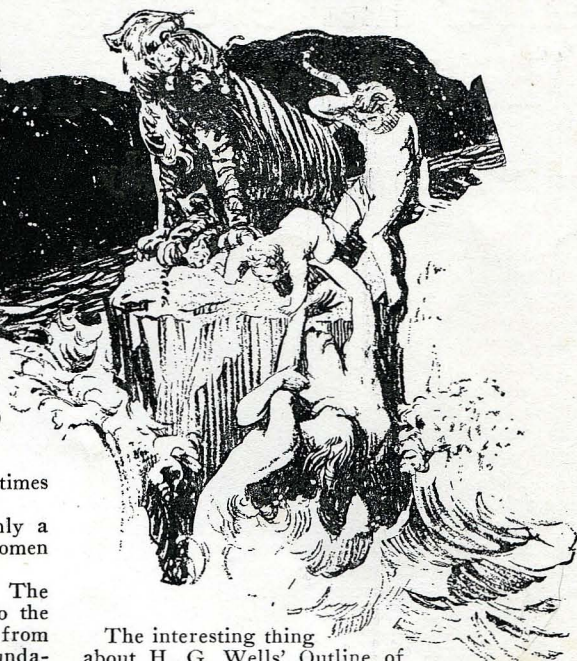
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